THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

A NEW TRANSLATION

VOLUME 21

THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

A NEW TRANSLATION

Founded by
LUDWIG SCHOPP

SAINT AUGUSTINE

CONFESSIONS

Translated by

VERNON J. BOURKE, Ph.D.

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA PRESS
Washington, D. C.

NIHIL OBSTAT:

JOHN M. A. FEARNS, S.T.D.
Censor Librorum

IMPRIMATUR:

✠ FRANCIS CARDINAL SPELLMAN
Archbishop of New York

August 15, 1953

The Nihil obstat and Imprimatur are official declarations that a book or pamphlet is free of doctrinal or moral error. No implication is contained therein that those who have granted the Nihil obstat and Imprimatur agree with contents, opinions or statements expressed.

Library of Congress Catalog Card No.: 66-20310
ISBN-13: 978-0-8132-1561-7 (pbk)

Reprinted 1966
First paperback reprint 2008

CONTENTS

WRITINGS
OF
SAINT AUGUSTINE

VOLUME 5

INTRODUCTION

THROUGHOUT THE CONFESSIONS it is evident that St. Augustine is addressing his words directly to God. As he himself says: 'The thirteen books of my *Confessions* praise the just and good God, both on the basis of my good and of my evil deeds, and they elevate the human understanding and affections to Him.'[1] Thus, the *Confessions* is at once a profession of religious faith, a meditation on the wondrous workings of Providence, and a hymn of divine praise.[2]

That Augustine had human readers in mind is also evident. He had left North Africa in 383, an adherent of the Manichaean religion. After five years spent in Rome and in Milan, he appeared again in Carthage as a baptized and zealous Christian. Naturally, his distant conversion must have been the subject of much speculation and curiosity among both Manichaeans and Catholics in Africa. Of course, several of his relatives and friends had shared his religious

1 *Retractationes* 2.6.1.

2 For a thorough discussion of the various views on the purpose and plan of the *Confessions*, cf. P. Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions* (Paris 1950) 13-29; also, the introduction to the editions by Gibb-Montgomery and by Campbell-McGuire.

experiences in North Italy and they were trustworthy witnesses to the engrossing story of Augustine's conversion. As early as 395, one of his intimate friends, Alypius, wrote a letter to the famous Christian ascetic, Paulinus of Nola, enclosing some of the anti-Manichaean writings of Augustine. Paulinus replied[3] with a request for a complete account of Alypius' life. Apparently, Augustine undertook the task;[4] it seems that these biographical notes were later incorporated into that section of the *Confessions* which deals with Alypius.[5]

Perhaps Paulinus then asked for fuller information on Augustine's life; some writers think that the early books of the *Confessions* were occasioned by such an inquiry.[6] Paulinus may be one of the 'spiritual men' to whom Augustine addressed himself in a famous passage of the *Confessions*.[7] Years later (in 429), writing to Count Darius, to whom he was sending a copy of his *Confessions*, Augustine said: 'Accept these books of my *Confessions* which you have requested; look upon me as portrayed therein, so that you will not praise me excessively . . . and if you find anything pleasing in me, then join me in giving praise to Him whom I wished to be praised as a result of my experience; but do not praise me.'[8] This passage expresses the two purposes of the *Confessions*. The work is primarily for the glory of God, secondarily for the edification of all men who will read it. In his own lifetime, Augustine had the satisfaction of knowing that many readers found inspiration and pleasure in his account of how God had brought him back to the faith of his mother.[9]

Augustine himself regarded the *Confessions* as composed of two parts. He states that the first ten books are about himself

3 S. Paulini Nolensis, *Epistula ad Alypium* 3.4 (*CSEL* 29.16).
4 *Epist. ad Paulinum* 27.5. (*CSEL* 34.1.101).
5 Cf. *Conf.* 6.7-10.
6 Cf. Courcelle, *op. cit.* 31.
7 *Conf.* 5.10.20.
8 *Epist. ad Darium* 231.6.
9 *Retract.* 2.6.1.

and that the last three are concerned with the meaning of the opening chapters of Genesis.[10] Actually, the first part may be further subdivided, for the initial nine books tell his life story up to his conversion and the death of St. Monica, while the tenth is a frank survey of his spiritual and moral dispositions at the time of writing. Books 11-13 have not the immediate appeal of the earlier autobiographical sections, yet they constitute a very important source of information on the religious and philosophical views of their author. In them Augustine offers an allegorical interpretation of the creation of the world. In effect, after praising the grace of God as manifested in his own tumultuous life, Augustine turns, at the end of the *Confessions,* to the evidence of God's power and greatness in the whole created universe. If we remember the theme of the whole work, that it is a paean of praise to the Creator, we will recognize the eminent suitability of these last books within the complete work.

For the understanding and appreciation of the *Confessions* a few chronological and historical details are useful. Augustine was born on November 13, 354, in the town of Tagaste, which was situated in the Roman province of Numidia. His mother was a member of the Catholic Church, but his father remained a pagan until shortly before his death in 370. After elementary studies in Tagaste and Madaura, Augustine went to Carthage in the autumn of 370 to study rhetoric. He had been enrolled from infancy as a catechumen in the Catholic Church, but had not yet been baptized in his mother's faith.

Soon after going to Carthage, Augustine became interested in the Manichaean religion. The followers of Mani (a third-century religious teacher from Persia) professed to have rational proofs for all their beliefs. They taught a cosmic dualism of good and evil, or light and darkness. These two competing principles, they claimed, were in continual strife

10 *Ibid.*

in the universe. Similarly, within each man, two souls and two wills were pictured as competing incessantly for dominance. The Manichaean writings embroidered this basic dualism of good and evil (which appears to owe much to Zoroastrianism as well as to Gnosticism) with a plethora of amazing myths which cannot be described here.[11] This was the religion in which Augustine remained an 'auditor' for about nine years, approximately from 373 to 382.[12]

It was in the fall of 383 that Augustine went to Rome to establish his own school of rhetoric. He was still known as a Manichaean, but he felt many doubts as to the validity of this doctrine and eventually passed through a short period of skepticism. A year later he was appointed municipal teacher of rhetoric in Milan. There he came under the influence of the famous Catholic bishop, St. Ambrose. Other learned Christians, such as Simplicianus and Manlius Theodorus, became his friends. From them and from personal reading, Augustine learned of a type of Greek philosophy, Neo-Platonism, which seemed capable of being interpreted in consonance with Christian revelation.[13] This philosophy had been expounded in the *Enneads* of Plotinus (a third-century philosopher in Alexandria and Rome) and popularized in the writings of Porphyry, a pupil of Plotinus. Neo-Platonism was an ideal counter agent to Manichaean teachings, for Plotinus stressed the unitary origin of all reality, as opposed to Manichaean dualism; in contrast to the materialism of Mani, Plotinus held that the most real being was the immaterial; and in moral matters, where Manichaeanism was weakest, Neo-Platonism taught that true happiness was

---

11 For the most recent short account in English of Manichaeism, cf, H.C. Puech, 'The Prince of Darkness, in *Satan* (New York 1952) 127-157. This article contains references to the standard studies by F.C. Baur, P. Alfaric, F. Cumont, H.J. Polotsky, and A.V.W. Jackson.

12 Cf. H. Pope, *Saint Augustine of Hippo* (Westminster, Md. 1949) 82-83.

13 Cf. P. Courcelle, *op. cit.* 93-138; also, 139-174, on the Neo-Platonic influence of Ambrose, Theodorus, and Simplicianus.

only to be found in the withdrawal of one's soul from the attractions of the bodily world, into itself, and above itself to an ecstatic union with the One from which all things had come.[14]

Of philosophic influences, Neo-Platonism was doubtless the greatest in the development of Augustine's mind.[15] Through it he gradually came to appreciate the importance of immaterial things and of the interior life of the spirit. Now, too, the sermons of St. Ambrose, conversations with Christian friends, and the unceasing prayers and good example of Monica fired Augustine with the desire to become a Catholic. In the autumn of 386 he resigned his teaching position in Milan and retired to a country place, Cassiciacum, for some months of rest, study and spiritual meditation, in preparation for baptism. He was baptized by Ambrose on the Saturday before Easter in 387.

Augustine soon decided to return, with Monica and other relatives and friends, to his home in North Africa. While they were near Rome, awaiting transport to Carthage, St. Monica died at the seaport town of Ostia. Her death is practically the last incident in the autobiographical section of the *Confessions*. From other works we learn of his eventual return to Carthage and Tagaste. With a few associates, Augustine lived a semi-monastic life in Tagaste until 391, when he was ordained priest in the town of Hippo. From the first, his work as a priest was outstanding. Toward the end of 395 or at the beginning of 396, he was consecrated

---

14 For more information on Neo-Platonic teachings, consult: A. H. Armstrong, *The Real Meaning of Plotinus' Intelligible World* (Oxford 1949); P. Henry, 'Augustine and Plotinus,' *Journal of Theological Studies* 38 (1937) 1-23; Sister M. Patricia Garvey, *St. Augustine, Christian or Neoplatonist?* (Milwaukee 1939); C. Boyer, *Christianisme et néoplatonisme dans la formation de saint Augustin* (Paris 1920); J. Barion, *Plotin und Augustinus* (Berlin 1935).

15 A. C. Pegis, 'The Mind of St. Augustince,' *Mediaeval Studies* 6 (1944) 1-61, gives the best account of the importance of Neo-Platonism in the thought of Augustine.

auxiliary bishop of Hippo, succeeding to the see in a year or so.

As bishop, Augustine built up his diocese spiritually and materially, engaged in numerous religious controversies against the Manichaeans, Donatists, Pelagians, and other opponents of his Church. He preached hundreds of famous sermons, was a leading participant in frequent councils of bishops, and wrote the many letters and treatises which are now a precious record of the golden days of Christianity in North Africa. Apart from the *Confessions,* the most notable of his writings are: *On the Trinity* (written 400-416), *Literal Commentary on Genesis* (401-415), *City of God* (413-426), *Tractates on the Gospel of St. John* (416-417), *Enchiridion* (421), and the *Retractationes* (426).[16]

Of all Augustine's writings, the *Confessions* has perhaps the broadest appeal and the finest literary character. Its importance in Christian literature would be difficult to overestimate. It has that universality which is the special mark of a great classic. Not only Christians, but readers of quite diverse religious persuasion, find that the *Confessions* elicits a profound response in the heart of the attentive and serious person. Thousands of readers in every century since its appearance have been convinced that they, too, have gone throngh a religious experience similar to that of St. Augustine. Indeed, it is an epic of spiritual conversion. That is why it was cherished by the *Summa* writers and the popular poets of the middle ages, by the humanists and reformers of the renaissance, by the rationalists and the mystics of modern times. Today, the *Confessions* is still one of the Great Books.

The most accurate estimate would place the date of writing

---

16 Those interested in the later life of St. Augustine will find a good, accurate biography in G. Bardy, *Saint Augustin, l'homme et l'oeuvre* (Paris 1946). See, also V.J. Bourke, *Augustine's Quest of Wisdom* (Milwaukee 1945).

in the years 397 to 401. Internal chronological evidence in the *Confessions* is scant. The account of Augustine's early life ends with the description of the death of his mother, St. Monica, at Ostia in 387.[17] Though Book 10 describes the condition of Augustine's soul at the time of writing, which is apparently about ten years after Monica's death, no exact information on the time factor is given in this place.

There is one passage (8.2.3) which refers to St. Ambrose as a bishop, as if he were still alive. In the same place, Simplicianus is mentioned without the episcopal title. Ambrose died on April 4, 397, and Simplicianus succeeded him as Bishop of Milan. Allowing a few months for this important news to come to Augustine in Africa, we may conclude with some probability that Augustine wrote the first eight or nine books of the *Confessions* before the end of the summer of 397.

References to the *Confessions,* in other works by Augustine, serve to confirm this dating, but also suggest that the Bishop of Hippo may have taken several years in its composition. Toward the end of his life, Augustine wrote a review of most of his literary works in the approximate order of their production.[18] Listed immediately before the *Confessions* is a group of works of the period 395-396, but the treatises placed directly after the *Confessions* are hard to date. This makes it difficult to give a terminal date for the finishing of the last books of the *Confessions*. However, a reference to Book 13 of the *Confessions* is found in the *Literal Commentary on Genesis,*[19] indicating 401 as the *terminus ad quem*. It is quite possible that the first nine or ten books belong to the period

17 *Conf.* 9.13.37.

18 *Retract.* 2.6.1. situates the *Confessions* between *Contra partem Donati, Libri Duo* and *Contra Faustum Manichaeum, Libri XXXIII.*

19 *De Genesi ad litteram* 2.9.22; cf. G. Bardy, *Les Révisions* (Paris 1950) 578.

397-398 and that the last books were added after a lapse of two or three years.[20]

The best Latin text is that edited by Martin Skutella, in the Teubner series, 1934. This edition is used as the basis for the present translation. Since the modern reader is accustomed to shorter paragraphs than are customary in the Latin editions of patristic writings, this translation adopts most of the paragraph divisions introduced by Pierre De Labriolle in his excellent Latin-French text.

More than fifty translations of the *Confessions* into modern languages have been made, including about ten in English. The present translator has attempted simply to provide a version which follows the Latin as closely as English idiom will permit. Considerable effort has been made to use language which will give something of the flavor of Augustine's original text—his alliteration, word-plays, and complicated rhetorical devices.[21] It would be pretentious to suggest that the English approaches the quality of Augustine's Latin; the translator has merely tried to do a little more, in this regard, than has been done previously.

A special feature of the literary style of the *Confessions* is the constant echoing of the language of the Old Latin Bible. St. Augustine knew many parts of the Scriptures by heart, particularly the Psalms, and an apt Biblical phrase was ever ready on his lips. This presents a real difficulty in translation, because the Latin Bible used by Augustine is not identical with the text from which modern translations, Catholic or

---

20 For further discussion of the date, see the introductions to the Latin editions of the *Confessions* by M. Skutella, P. De Labriolle, and Gibb-Montgomery. Consult also S. M. Zarb, 'Chronologia operum S. Augustini,' *Angelicum* 10 (1933) 366-375, 482-484; and D. Franses, 'Controversen over Augustinus' Belijdenissen,' in *Augustinus* (Nijmegen 1930) 345.

21 English readers who may wish to study a portion of the Latin text will find the selections edited by J.M. Campbell and M. McGuire as *The Confessions of St. Augustine* (New York 1931) very convenient. Also useful for this purpose is C. Wolfschläger und O. Koch, *S. Augustini Confessiones in Auswahl herausgegeben und erläutert,* 2 vols. (Münster i. W. 1946).

otherwise, are made.[22] Moreover, Augustine's quotations are often conscious modifications of the Scriptural phrase, altered to fit the construction of his own sentences. In this translation, the English of these passages is taken, where possible, from the Douay-Challoner revision of the Old Testament (New York 1941) and the Rheims-Challoner New Testament, as revised by American Catholic scholars (Paterson, N.J. 1941).

Previous English translations have not been accompanied by footnotes of such a nature as to enable the general reader fully to understand the *Confessions*. It is hoped that the more extensive documentation of the present translation will be adequate for all ordinary users of the work. Obviously, technical points of language, thought, and historical sources will require consultation of the critical Latin texts and their annotations. These editions are listed in the bibliography which follows. This *Select Bibliography* is not intended to be complete, nor does it contain all the items cited in the footnotes. For a general bibliography of Augustine studies, the reader may consult C.M.F. Nebreda, *Bibliographia Augustiniana, seu operum collectio quae divi Augustini vitam et doctrinam quadamtenus exponunt* (Roma 1928). Specialized bibliographies of the *Confessions* are to be found in most of the special studies listed hereafter. One of the best and most recent is included in Pierre Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions* 259-278.

The translator wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the special editorial work of Dr. Bernard M. Peebles, in connection with the revision of the present version. His many corrections and felicitous suggestions extended far beyond the ordinary work of an editor.

---

22 There is still no complete agreement among scholars as to the identity of the *Itala* version of the Bible (mentioned, possibly by textual error, in *De doctrina Christiana* 2.15.22) used by Augustine before he had St. Jerome's translation and even somewhat after he received the Vulgate. For an excellent study of Augustine's biblical scholarship, see D. De Bruyne, 'Saint Augustin reviseur de la Bible,' in *Miscellanea Agostiniana* 2 (Roma 1931) 521-606.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Texts:

Confessionum Libri Tredecim post P. Knöll, iteratis curis edidit Martinus Skutella (Lipsiae in aedibus B.G. Teubneri 1934). This is the best critical edition.

Confessiones, ed. Ioannis Mantelin (Argentoratum *c.* 1465-1470). Probably the *editio princeps.*

Confessiones opera et studio Monachorum S. Benedicti a Congregatione S. Mauri (*Opera Omnia* I, Paris 1679), reprinted by J.P. Migne, *PL* 32.659-866 (Paris 1845).

Confessionum Libri XIII, ed. P. Knöll, *CSEL* 33 (Vienna 1896; editio minor, Biblioteca Teubneriana (Leipzig 1898).

The Confessions of Augustine, Latin text edited by J. Gibb and W. Montgomery (Cambridge, Eng. 1908: 2nd ed. 1927).

Confessions, texte établie et traduit par Pierre De Labriolle, 5me ed. (Paris 1950, t. I: Livres 1-8; t. II: Livres 9-13).

Confessiones, ed. A. C. Vega (Madrid 1946).

Confessionum Libri XIII, introductione et notis aucti cura et studio J. Capello (Taurini-Romae 1948).

Confessiones, ed. M. Verheijen, L. Hoogveld, K. Woldring (Zwolle 1950).

Translations:

Matthew, Sir Tobie, *Confessions* (London 1620; 2nd ed. Paris 1638). This first English translation was made by a Catholic priest.

Watts, William, *Confessions* (London 1631; 2nd ed. 1650). This is the first version by an Anglican scholar.

Pusey, E. B., *The Confessions of St. Augustine* (Library of the Fathers, 1-2, London 1838; reprinted 1883 and frequently thereafter).

Rouse, W. H. D., *Confessions* (Loeb Library, London-New York 1912). A revision of Watts.

Hudleston, R., *Confessions* (London 1923; 6th ed. 1948). A revision of Matthew.

Sheed, F. J., *Confessions* (New York 1943).

Other English translations have been made by: A. Woodhead (London 1679), J. G. Pilkington (London 1876), C. Bigg (London 1897).

French versions, all printed in Paris: R. Arnaud d'Andilly (1649), M. Dubois (1685), Abbé de Lammenais (1822), L. Moreau (1840), E. Saisset (1855), P. Janet (1857), M. Charpentier (1861), L. Gougaud (1923), P. De Labriolle (1925), G. Combès, (1942), L. De Mondadon (1947).

German translations: Kautz (Arnsberg 1840), Gröninger (Münster 1859), Silbert (Wien 1861), Wilden (Schaffhausen 1865), A. Bornemann (Leipzig 1891), A. Hoffmann (München 1914), H. Hefele (Jena 1921), G. F. von Hertling (Freiburg i. B. 1928), W. Thimme (Zürich 1950).

Italian translations: O. Tescari (Torino 1936), A. Masini (Firenze 1938), Norberto della Scuola Cristiana (Torino 1938), G. Capello (Torino 1945).

Dutch: A. Sizoo (Delft 1928).

Spanish: A. C. Vega (Madrid-Escorial 1946).

Studies:

Alfaric, P., *L'évolution intellectuelle de saint Augustin* (Paris 1918).

Arts, Sister Raphael, *The Syntax of the Confessions of St. Augustine* (Washington 1927).

Bardy, G., *Saint Augustin, l'homme et l'oeuvre.*, 6me éd. (Paris 1946).

Bourke, V. J., *Augustine's Quest of Wisdom* (Milwaukee 1945).

Boyer, C., *Christianisme et néoplatonisme dans la formation de saint Augustin* (Paris 1920).

Burkitt, F. C., *The Religion of the Manichees* (Cambridge 1925).

Campbell, J. M. and McGuire, M., *The Confessions of St. Augustine* (New York 1931). Selected Latin texts with introduction, notes, and vocabulary.

Carrol, Sister M. Borromeo, *The Clausulae in the Confessions of St. Augustine* (Washington 1940).

Cayré, F., *Initiation à la philosophie de saint Augustin* (Paris 1947).

Courcelle, P., *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin* (Paris 1950).

D'Arcy, M., *et al., Monument to St. Augustine* (London 1930; New York 1931).

Franses, D., 'Controversen over Augustinus' Belijdenissen,' in *Augustinus* (Nijmegen 1930) 344-361.

Garvey, Sister M. Patricia, *St. Augustine, Christian or Neoplatonist?* (Milwaukee 1939).

Gilson, E., *Introduction à l'étude de saint Augustin,* 2me éd. (Paris 1943).

Gros, H., 'La valeur documentaire des Confessions,' *La Vie Spirituelle* 14 (1926) 1-18, 66-88; 15 (1927) 168-177, 259-314.

Guitton, J., *Le temps et l'éternité chez saint Augustin* (Paris 1933).

Harnack, A. von, *Augustins Konfessionen* (Giessen 1888).

Le Blond, J. M., *Les conversions de saint Augustin* (Paris 1950).

Miscellanea Agostiniana. Testi e studi pubblicati a cura dell' Ordine eremitano de S. Agostino nel XV centenario della morte del santo Dottore (Roma 1930-1931) 2 vols.

Ottley, R. L., *Studies in the Confessions of St. Augustine* (London 1919).
Pegis, A. C., 'The Mind of St. Augustine, *Mediaeval Studies* 6 (1944) 1-61.
Pope, H., *St. Augustine of Hippo* (London 1937; reprinted Westminster, Md. 1949).
Portalié, E., 'Augustin, saint,' *DTC* I,2 (Paris 1909) col. 2268-2472.
Puech, H. C., *Le manichéisme, son fondateur, sa doctrine* (Paris 1949).
Puech, H. C., 'The Prince of Darkness in His Kingdom,' in *Satan* (New York 1952) 127-157.
Sizoo, A., *Toelichting op Augustinus' Belijdenissen,* (Delft 1948).
Thimme, W., *Augustins Selbstbildnis in den Konfessionen* (Gütersloh 1929).
Vega, A. C., *St. Augustine* (Philadelphia 1931).
Wagner, Sister M. M., 'Plan in the Confessions of St. Augustine,' *Philological Quarterly* (1944) 1-23.
Williger, E., 'Der Aufbau der Konfessionen Augustins,' *Zeitschrift für neutest. Wissenschaft* 28 (1929) 81-106.
Wundt, M., 'Augustins Konfessionen,' *Zeitschrift für neutest. Wissenschaft* 22 (1923) 161-206.
Zepf, M., *Augustins Confessiones* (Heidelberger Abhandl. zur Philos. 9, Tübingen 1926).

TOPICAL ANALYSIS

BOOK ONE: AUGUSTINE'S BOYHOOD

BOOK TWO: A YEAR OF IDLENESS

BOOK THREE: LIFE IN CARTHAGE

BOOK FOUR: NINE YEARS A MANICHAEAN

BOOK FIVE: TEACHING IN ROME AND MILAN

BOOK SIX: MORAL AND RELIGIOUS INDECISION

Chapter *Page*

BOOK SEVEN: THROUGH PHILOSOPHY TO CHRIST

BOOK EIGHT: STRUGGLES OF CONVERSION

BOOK NINE: AUGUSTINE'S BAPTISM; MONICA'S DEATH

BOOK TEN: SEARCHING FOR GOD IN MEMORY

BOOK ELEVEN: GOD AND THE BEGINNING OF TIME

BOOK TWELVE: THE AUTHOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

BOOK THIRTEEN: THE FIRST SEVEN DAYS

Chapter *Page*

SAINT AUGUSTINE

CONFESSIONS

Translated by

VERNON J. BOURKE, Ph.D.

St. Louis University

BOOK ONE

Chapter 1

'THOU ART GREAT, O Lord, and greatly to be praised.'[1] 'Thy power is great and of Thy wisdom there is no number.'[2] To praise Thee is the wish of man who is but a part of Thy creation, man who carries about with him his own mortality, who carries about the evidence of his sin and the evidence 'that Thou resisteth the proud.'[3] And yet, to praise Thee is the wish of man who is but a part of Thy creation. Thou dost bestir him so that he takes delight in

---

1 Ps. 144.3. Throughout the *Confessions,* texts from Holy Scripture are woven into the fabric of Augustine's work. Only the more important are noted in this translation. Scholars will find more complete Scripture references in the standard Latin editions. These texts are given here, where possible, in the English of the Douay-Challoner Old Testament (New York 1941) and the American revision of the Challoner-Rheims New Testament (Paterson 1941). There are two reasons why these cannot always be used: Augustine sometimes quotes from memory or modifies a text to fit a new grammatical construction; and Augustine's Old Latin version is not identical with the Vulgate. 'Cf.' in the notes will indicate a modified quotation.

2 Ps. 146.5.

3 James 4.6; 1 Peter 5.5.

praising Thee: for Thou hast made us for Thee and our heart is unquiet till it finds its rest in Thee.[4]

Grant unto me, O Lord, to know and to understand whether first to invoke Thee or to praise Thee; whether first to know Thee or to invoke Thee. But, who invokes Thee without knowing Thee? For, he who knows Thee not might invoke another being in Thy stead. Or, art Thou rather invoked in order that Thou mayest be known? Indeed, 'how are they to invoke Him in whom they have not believed? Or how are they to believe, if no one preaches?'[5] 'And they shall praise the Lord that seek Him.'[6] For, they who seek shall find Him and they who find Him shall praise Him.

May I seek Thee, O Lord, by invoking Thee, and may I invoke Thee by believing in Thee: for Thou hast been preached to us. My faith invokes Thee, O Lord, that faith which Thou hast given me, which Thou hast breathed into me through the humanity of Thy Son, through the ministry of Thy preacher.[7]

Chapter 2

(2) How shall I invoke my God, my God and my Lord, since, when I invoke Him, I call Him into my very self? What place is in me, into which My God may come? Where can God come into me, the God who has made heaven and earth?[8] Is there anything in me, O Lord my God, which can encompass Thee? Indeed, can heaven and earth, which Thou

4 *inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te*: this much quoted statement sets the mood and theme of the work.
5 Rom. 10.14.
6 Ps. 21.27.
7 St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, who instructed Augustine in the Catholic faith and baptized him in 387; cf. below, 9.6.14.
8 Cf. Gen. 1.1. Cf. below, 11.2.2, for the beginning of Augustine's commentary on this text.

hast made and in which Thou hast made me, encompass Thee? Or, since without Thee nothing that is could be, is it that whatever is contains Thee? Since, in fact, I am, why do I ask that Thou shouldst come into me—I, who would not be unless Thou wert in me? For I am not now in hell, and yet Thou art even there. Because, 'even if I descend into hell, Thou art present.'[9]

Hence, I would not be, my God, I would not be at all, unless Thou wert in me. Rather, is it not that I would not be unless I were in Thee, 'from whom, through whom, and in whom are all things'?[10] It is even so, O Lord, even so. Into what can I invoke Thee, since I am in Thee? Or, whence canst Thou come into me? Where may I go beyond heaven and earth, in order that my God may then come into me, He who has said: 'I fill heaven and earth'?[11]

Chapter 3

(3) Do heaven and earth encompass Thee, then, since Thou fillest them? Or dost Thou fill them and still have something left over, since they cannot contain Thee? And where dost Thou overflow when, having filled heaven and earth, something more remains of Thee? Or dost Thou have no need of a container, Thou who containest all things, since what things Thou fillest, Thou fillest by containing them? It is not the vessels filled with Thee which hold Thee in position, for, even were they to break, Thou wouldst not spill out. And when Thou dost flow out over us, Thou dost not fall to the earth; rather, Thou dost lift us up.[12] Nor dost Thou scatter Thyself; rather, Thou dost gather us in.

---

9 Ps. 138.8.
10 Cf. Rom. 11.36.
11 Jer. 23.24.
12 Ps. 145.8.

Dost Thou fill all the things which Thou fillest with Thy entirety? Or, because all things cannot encompass Thee in Thy entirety, do they contain part of Thee? And do all things contain the same part at once? Or does each contain its separate part, the bigger things bigger parts, the smaller things smaller parts? Is one part of Thee bigger, then, another smaller? Or art Thou everywhere entire and does no thing contain Thee wholly?

Chapter 4

(4) What art Thou, then, my God? What, I ask but the Lord God? For, who is the Lord, but the Lord? Or who is God, besides our God?[13]

O Highest, Best, most Powerful, most Omnipotent, most Merciful and most Just, most Hidden and most Evident, most Beautiful and most Strong, Stable and Incomprehensible, Immutable; moving all things, never new, never old, renewing all things;[14] 'bringing the proud to senility and they know it not';[15] ever active, ever quiet, gathering in and requiring nothing, supporting and filling and protecting, creating and nourishing, perfecting, seeking, when nothing is lacking to Thee. Thou lovest, but art not disturbed by passion; Thou art jealous, but free from care; Thou art repentant, but not sorrowful; Thou art angry, but calm; Thou changest Thy works, but not Thy plan; Thou dost recover what Thou findest, but hast never lost; never in need, Thou dost rejoice in gain; never covetous, Thou dost demand payment with interest. More than Thou askest is given Thee, so that Thou mayest be in debt, but who has anything which is not Thine? Thou payest debts while owing no one; remittest debts while losing

13 Cf. Ps. 17.32.
14 Cf. Wisd. 7.27.
15 Job. 9.5 (Old Lat. version).

nothing. What have we said, my God, my Life, my holy Sweetness—or what can anyone say—when he speaks of Thee? Yet, woe to those who do not speak of Thee; for, though they talk much, they say nothing.[16]

Chapter 5

(5) Who will grant unto me to find repose in Thee? Who will grant unto me that Thou wilt come into my heart and inebriate it, so that I may forget my evils and embrace my one Good, Thee?

What art Thou for me? Be merciful, that I may speak. What am I myself for Thee, that Thou dost command my love for Thee, and, unless I give it, art angry with me and threaten enormous afflictions? Is it a small thing in itself if I fail to love Thee? Ah me! Tell me, in Thy mercy, O Lord, my God, what Thou art for me. 'Say to my soul: I am thy salvation.'[17] So speak that I may hear. Behold the ears of my heart before Thee, O Lord; open them and say to my soul: 'I am thy salvation.' May I pursue this voice and grasp Thee. Hide not Thy face from me:[18] let me die so that I may see it, lest I die.[19]

(6) Narrow is the household of my soul, for Thou to come into it: let it be enlarged by Thee. It lies in ruins: do Thou rebuild it. It has things within it which offend Thine eyes: I confess and know it. But who will cleanse it? Or to what other being than Thee shall I cry out: 'from my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord, and from those of others spare Thy

---

16 Cf. *Tract. in Joan.* 13.5: 'Everything can be said of God, yet nothing is worthy of being said of God.'

17 Ps. 34.3.

18 Combining Ps. 142.7, Exod. 33.20, and Deut. 31.17.

19 That is: Grant that I may leave this life and see Thy face, so that I shall not die spiritually.

servant.'[20] 'I believe, and that is why I speak.'[21] Lord, Thou knowest. Have I not 'confessed against myself my injustices,' O my God, and Thou 'hast forgiven the wickedness of my heart?'[22] I do not dispute with Thee in judgment, who art the Truth; and I do not wish to deceive myself, 'lest my iniquity lie to itself.'[23] Therefore, I do not dispute with Thee in judgment; for, 'If Thou, O Lord, wilt mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand it?'[24]

Chapter 6

(7) Nevertheless, permit me to address Thy mercy, I who am but dust and ashes;[25] permit me to speak. For, behold, it is not man, my mocker, but Thy mercy to which I speak. Perhaps Thou, too, dost smile in mockery at me, but once Thou hast turned toward me, Thou wilt have compassion on me. For, what do I want to say, O Lord, except that I know not whence I came here, into this condition, I mean, of dying life, or living death? I do not know. The consolations of Thy mercy[26] have sustained me, just as I heard them from the parents of my body, by one of whom and in one of whom Thou hast formed me in time; indeed, I myself do not remember.

And so, the consolations of human milk supported me; for, neither my mother nor my nurses filled their own breasts, but Thou gavest me the food of infancy through them, according to Thy planning and riches which are arranged even for the lowest order of things. Thou hast also given me the desire

20 Ps. 18.13-14.
21 Cf. Ps. 115.1.
22 Ps. 31.5.
23 Ps. 26.12.
24 Ps. 129.3.
25 Cf. Gen. 18.27.
26 Cf. Ps. 143.7; 68.17.

for no more than Thou didst give, and to my nurses the wish to give me what Thou hast given them. For they wished to give me, through their well-ordered love, what they had received in abundance from Thee. It was a good thing for them that my good was from them; in fact, it was not from them but through them: since all goods are from Thee, O God, and from my God is my entire salvation. This I learned later, when Thou didst proclaim it to me through those very things which Thou givest from within and from without. At that time, I knew only to suckle and to be satisfied with enjoyable things and to cry at injuries to my flesh—nothing more.

(8) Later, I began to smile: first, while sleeping; then, while waking. This was told me about myself and I believed it, since we so observe other babies; of course, I do not remember those things about myself. Then, gradually, I became aware of where I was and began to desire to make known my wishes to those who might take care of them. But I could not, because these wishes were inside and those people outside. These latter were not endowed with any sense whereby they might enter into my soul. So I began to toss about my limbs and my cries, as signs indicating my wishes, doing the few things that I could, as well as I could, for they were not like the truth. When I was not heeded, either because not understood or because of a harmful request, I became indignant at the fact that my elders did not obey and, independent, would not serve me. So, I got even with them by crying. That babies are like this I have learned by observing whatever ones I could. And that I was like this they in their ignorance have shown me, rather than my nurses with their knowledge.

(9) And behold, my babyhood is long since dead, yet I live. But Thou, O Lord, art ever living and in Thee nothing dies (for before the beginnings of the centuries and before everything which can even be said to be 'before,' Thou art, and Thou art God and the Lord of all things which Thou

hast created, and with Thee the causes of all unstable things stand firm, the immutable sources of all mutable things dwell, and the eternal reasons of all irrational and temporal things live). Tell me, Thy suppliant, O God, in mercy to Thy miserable creature, tell me whether my babyhood followed some period which was then dead.[27] Or was that the period which I spent within my mother's womb? Something concerning that period has been told me and I myself have seen pregnant women. What was before that, my Sweetness, my God? Was I any place or any one? I have no one to tell me these things: neither my mother nor my father could, nor could the experiences of others, nor my own memory. Art Thou smiling at me for asking these questions of Thee; dost Thou bid me praise Thee and confess unto Thee only from what I know?

(10) I confess[28] unto Thee, O Lord of heaven and earth,[29] addressing to Thee the praise of my beginnings and my babyhood which I do not remember. Thou hast permitted man to conjecture these things about himself from other people, and to believe many things about himself even on the authority of lowly women. In fact, I did exist and was alive even then, and at the very close of babyhood I tried to find the signs whereby I might make known my feelings to others.

Whence an animated being of this sort, if not from Thee,

---

27 Augustine was never certain as to the time or manner of origin of the individual human soul. He often conjectures that it may have been in existence before its body, but he is certain that each soul is created by God and is not part of God. Cf. *De Gen. ad litt.* 7.25,26 and *Epist.* 166.

28 Note the bivalent significance of the term, *confessio*, as used by St. Augustine, and as stated in the preceding sentence: (a) an expression of praise of God and the working of His grace; (b) an admission of the fact and guilt of personal sin. Thus, *Enarr. in ps.* 144.13: 'confession is used not only of sins but also of praise' and *Retract.* 2.6.1: 'The books of *Confessions* praise God both from my evils and from my goods. Cf. Campbell and McGuire, *Confessions of St. Augustine* 65 n. 1; Gibb and Montgomery, *Confessions of Augustine* (note on title).

29 Cf. Matt. 11.25.

O Lord? Is any one going to be the artificer in his own production? Or is there some vein coursing from another source, by which being and life flow into us, other than the fact that Thou makest us, O Lord, to whom being and life are not different things, since the highest Being and the highest Life are identical?

In fact, Thou art the highest Being and dost not change,[30] nor is there any completion of today in Thee, yet in Thee it does complete itself, for all these things are in Thee, too. Indeed, they would not have their courses to run unless Thou didst contain them. And, since Thy years do not fail,[31] Thy years are but an ever-present today. How many of our own days, and of our ancestors', have passed through that today of Thine, receiving from it their measures and whatever being they had, while other days are still to pass through and receive their own measures and whatever being will be theirs. 'But Thou art always the self-same,'[32] and all the things of tomorrow and of the future Thou shalt make today, and all the things of yesterday and of the past Thou hast made today.

What is it to me, if someone does not understand? Let him also rejoice and say: 'What is this?'[33] Let him rejoice even so and desire to find Thee by not finding, rather than by finding not to find Thee.[34]

---

30 Cf. Mal. 3.6.

31 Ps. 101.28.

32 *Ibid.* The Augustinian formula, *tu autem idem ipse,* stems from this text of the Psalms; by it, Augustine tries to express the supreme immutability of God's Being. Cf. comment of E. Gilson on the importance of this text of the *Confessions* in Christian metaphysics, in *Le Thomisme* (5me éd. Paris 1944) 194; and the recurrence of the formula, below, 11.13.16.

33 Exod. 16.15; Eccli. 39.26.

34 The meaning of the characteristic paradox seems to be: It is better to know a very little about God, provided one does believe in Him, than to be very learned about God and not really be certain that He is. In *Serm.* 117.5, Augustine says: 'We are talking about God. What wonder is it that you do not understand? If you do understand, then it is not God.'

Chapter 7

(11) Hear me, O Lord. Woe to the sins of man! Man says this and Thou hast pity on him; for Thou hast made him, but Thou hast not made sin in him. Who can remind me of the sin of my infancy? For, no one is free from sin in Thy presence, not even the infant whose life has lasted but one day on earth. Who can remind me? Does not each tiny child, in whom I see what I do not remember about myself?

What sin, then, did I commit at that time? Was it that I tearfully gaped with longing for the breast? If I did that now with such longing, not of course for the breast, but for the food suitable to my years, I should be laughed at and most properly reprimanded. At that time, then, I did things meriting reproof, but, because I could not understand the reproof, neither custom nor reason permitted me to be reproved. For, we extirpate and throw off these things as we grow up, and I have not seen anyone who, in getting rid of something bad, knowingly throws away the good. Or were those things good in fact, in that period: tearfully to beg to be given even harmful things; violently to be offended at free and older human beings, as well as my parents and many other prudent persons besides, because they were not submissive and did not yield to my slightest whim, when striking them I tried my best to harm them for not obeying, though it would have hurt me had they obeyed?

So, the weakness of infant limbs is innocent, but not the mind of infants.[35] I myself have seen and have had experience with a jealous child: he could not yet speak, but, growing pale, would stare with a bitter look at his foster brother. Who does not know this? Mothers and nurses claim that they exorcize these things by all sorts of devices. Indeed, is this innocence, not to permit another child, who is in

35 Cf. *De peccat. merit. et remiss.* 1.35.66.

greatest need and depends for his life on this one sort of food, to share in a source of milk which is flowing freely and abundantly? These things are borne with equanimity, not that they are nothing or slight, but because they will disappear with increasing age. And it is right to suffer them, though such things cannot be borne with equanimity when they are observed in a person of more advanced years.

(12) Hence, O Lord my God, Thou who hast given life to a baby, and a body which is, as we see, so equipped with senses, so constructed in its members, so adorned in its features, and so constituted with all animate impulses toward integrity and well-being,[36] Thou commandest me to praise Thee in these things and to confess to Thee and to sing praises to Thy name, O most High.[37] Thou art the omnipotent and good God, even if Thou hadst done only these things which no one else but Thee could do; O Unity, from whom comes all measure; O perfect Form, who dost form all things[38] and order all things according to Thy Law.

Regretfully, then, I include in this life of mine, which I am living in this world, that period of my life, O Lord, in which I do not remember having lived at all, trusting others for my belief in it and surmising my actions in it from observing other babies; yet these surmises are much to be trusted. In so far, then, as it belongs to the darkness of my forgetfulness, it is on an equal basis with that period in which I lived within my mother's womb. But if I was 'conceived in iniquity and in sin did my mother nourish me within her womb,'[39] where, I beseech Thee, O my God, where, O Lord, where or when

36 Cicero, *De finibus* 2.11.33, has a verbal similarity: 'Nor, indeed, does nature move a baby to desire pleasure, but only to love itself, to wish its own integrity and well-being.'

37 Cf. Ps. 91.2.

38 Plotinus, *Ennead.* 1.6.6: [*tò theîon*] *'óthen 'e pegè toû kaloû*. Augustine's *formosissime, qui formas omnia* contains the same idea: God is the Beauty who produces all beauties.

39 Ps. 50.7.

was I Thy servant, innocent? But see, I leave out that period: what have I now in common with it, of which I remember not a trace?

Chapter 8

(13) Is it not true that, advancing from infancy toward the present, I came to boyhood? Or did it come into me, succeeding infancy? The latter did not go away; where, indeed, could it go? Nevertheless, it did not now exist. For, I was not an infant (one who could not speak),[40] but was now a boy able to talk. This I do remember, and I observed afterwards how I learned to speak. The older people did not teach me by suggesting the words to me according to any definite method of instruction, as was the case a little later with the alphabet; rather, with my own mind which Thou gavest me, O Lord, I wished to make known with divers grunts and sounds and with divers gestures the meanings within my heart, so that my will would be obeyed. But, I did not succeed with all things which I desired nor with all the people from whom I desired them. I would fasten[41] it in my memory, when these people called something by name and when, at this sound, they made a bodily movement toward it. I would observe and keep in mind that this thing was named by this sound which they uttered, when they wanted to indicate the thing. Their desires became evident from their bodily gestures (the natural speech of all mankind), which reveal the disposition of the mind, in regard to things sought, possessed, rejected, or avoided, by a facial expression, by a nod, by a movement of the eyes or some other part of the body, and by the tone of voice. As to these words that were used in

40 Augustine gives parenthetically the etymology of the word, infant (*in-fans, qui non farer*).

41 Reading *prensabam,* with the Benedictine and De Labriolle editions; the Mss. have six variants for this word.

their own places in different sentences and which I frequently heard, I gradually learned what things they were the signs of, and, when my lips had become accustomed to these expressions, I now expressed my desires by means of them.

In this way I exchanged with the people among whom I lived the signs which were the expressions of my wishes. I advanced into the stormy society of human life, subject to the authority of my parents and the control of older people.

Chapter 9

(14) O God, my God, what miseries and what mockeries I suffered in it,[42] when the only rule of right living set before me as a boy was to obey my teachers, so that I might flourish in this world and excel in the literary arts which pay lip-service to the fame of men and to false riches! As a result, I was put in school to learn my letters, the value of which I, poor child, did not know. Still, if I was slow in learning, I was whipped. This was approved by our elders, and many who have gone through this life before our time had prepared these painful ways[43] through which we were compelled to pass, and so multiplied for the sons of Adam[44] their labor and suffering.

At any rate, O Lord, we found men who prayed to Thee, and we learned from them, thinking of Thee, in so far as we were able, as some Great Being who, though not evident to our senses, might hear us and help us. As a boy, I began to pray to Thee, my Help and my Refuge,[45] and by invoking Thee I broke the knots which bound my tongue. As a little

42 *ibi,* referring to the 'society of human life' mentioned in the preceding sentence.
43 Cf. *De civ. Dei* 21.14.
44 Eccli. 40.1; Gen. 3.16-17.
45 Cf. Ps. 93.22.

child, but not with little feeling, I prayed to Thee that I might not be beaten in school. And when Thou didst not hear me (and this was not done to me for my folly[46]), my beatings, at that time a great and serious evil for me, were laughed at by older men and even by my parents themselves, who desired no evil to befall me.

(15) Is there any one, O Lord, of such magnanimity, cleaving to Thee with greatest affection—is there, I say, anyone (of course, there is a kind of stolidity which can do this, too)—is there anyone who, cleaving to Thee in his piety, is so mightily affected that he can consider of no importance the torture racks,[47] the iron claws and other such instruments of torture (to escape which, men in all parts of the world appeal to Thee in great fear), yet love them who fear these things most keenly? Was it not in just this way that my parents laughed at the tortures with which we, as children, were tormented by our masters? For we neither feared these things less nor besought Thee less in order to escape them; even so, we sinned, in writing, or reading, or thinking less about our studies than was required of us.

Memory and talent, O Lord, were not lacking; these Thou didst will me to possess in sufficient amount for that age. But, my delight was in play and we were punished for it by those who did just the same sort of things. However, among adults, trifling is called business, though the same sort of behavior in children is punished by adults and no one has pity on the children, or on the adults, or on both together. Of course, someone who is a good judge of these things may approve of my being beaten, because I played ball as a child and was held back by this sport from learning my letters quickly, by

46 Ps. 21.3; cf. *Enarr. in ps.* 53.5: 'Not for my folly [*insipientia*] didst Thou not hear me, but rather for wisdom [*sapientia*] . . . so that I might know what to ask of Thee.'

47 *eculeos*: exact structure unknown, but see reference to the *eculeus* as a stretching machine, in Seneca, *Epist.* 66.17; 67.3.

means of which I might engage in more shameful sports as an adult. Or did the man, by whom I used to be beaten, himself do anything different? If he were overcome in some petty dispute with one of his learned associates, he was more tortured by anger and jealousy than I, when I was overcome in a game of ball by one of my playmates.

Chapter 10

(16) Yet, I did sin, O Lord my God, Orderer and Creator of all natural things, but of sins the Orderer only[48]—O Lord my God, I did sin in acting against the commands of parents and those teachers. I could later on have made good use of those literary studies which they desired me to learn, whatever their intention in regard to me. In fact, I was not disobedient because I desired better things, but because of the love of play, loving proud victories in games and to have my ears tickled by deceitful stories, whereby they might itch more burningly as the same curiosity darted out more and more through my eyes toward shows, the sports of adults. But those who put on these shows stand out by virtue of their position, so that nearly all people desire the same success for their children, whom, however, they willingly allow to be whipped if they are held back in their studies by such shows. Yet, through those same studies, they desire them to reach the position in which they can put on such shows.

Look upon these things with mercy, O Lord, and deliver us who are now invoking Thee; deliver also those who do not yet call upon Thee, so that they will invoke Thee and Thou wilt deliver them.[49]

48 Cf. *De Gen. ad litt.* 3.24.37: 'God . . . the best Creator of natures, is indeed the most just Orderer of sins.'
49 Cf. Ps. 108.21-22; 101.3.

Chapter 11

(17) While still a boy, I had indeed heard of the eternal life promised us through the humility of our Lord God, descending to our pride. Fresh from the womb of my mother, who put much hope in Thee, I was marked with the sign of His cross and seasoned with His salt.[50]

Thou hast observed, O Lord, how on a certain day, when I was still a boy, I suddenly became feverishly ill with an oppressive pain in my stomach, and nearly died. Thou hast observed, O my God, for Thou wert already my Keeper,[51] with what agitation of mind and with what faith I begged for the baptism of Thy Christ, of my God my Lord, beseeching it from the piety of my mother and of the Mother of us all, Thy Church.

And the much disturbed mother of my flesh, because with even greater love she was also suffering, in a heart chaste in Thy faith, the labor pains of my eternal salvation, would have quickly arranged for me to be introduced to and cleansed by the saving rites, confessing Thee, O Lord Jesus, in the remission of sins, except for the fact that I suddenly became well again. And so, my cleansing was put off,[52] as if it were necessary that, if I lived, I should henceforth become more defiled; it being supposed, no doubt, that after that cleansing the guilt in the defilements of sin would have been greater and more dangerous.

Thus, I was now a believer, and she, too, and everyone in the household, with the sole exception of my father. But, he did not prevail over the right of maternal devotion in my regard, nor prevent my believing in Christ, when he did not yet do so.

---

50 That is, Augustine became a catechumen in the Catholic Church.

51 Cf. Gen. 28.15; Job 7.20.

52 Augustine's baptism was deferred, in keeping with a tendency in the early Church. Infants were, of course, often baptized. Cf. 'Catechumen, *Cath. Enc.* 3.430-432.

She ardently desired that Thou wouldst be a father to me, O my God, rather than he, and in this Thou didst help her to win over the man to whom, though his better, she gave obedience, being obedient in this also to Thee, who hadst commanded it.

(18) I ask Thee, my God—I should like to know, if such is also Thy will—for what purpose I was held back and not baptized then; whether it was or was not for my good that the reins which check sin were relaxed? Why, then, are our ears even now assailed on all sides, and about one case after another, with the sound of: 'Let him alone; let him do it; he is not yet baptized'? Yet, in regard to a matter of bodily health, we do not say: 'Let him alone; let him be wounded more; he has not yet been healed'! How much better, then, had I been quickly healed and had it been arranged for me by the diligence of me and mine, to have the health of my soul safely restored under the tutelage of Thee who wouldst have granted it.

Better, indeed! But my mother already knew how frequent and how strong were the waves of temptation which seemed to threaten my adolescence, and she wished to risk the clay whence I might later be formed, rather than the Image[53] itself already present.

Chapter 12

(19) In boyhood itself, for which less fear was felt than for my adolescence, I did not like my school work, and I detested being pushed into it. Nevertheless, I was pushed and

53 *effigiem*: this is not the *imago Dei*, of which *intelligentia, memoria, and voluntas* constitute the trinitarian principles (*De Trinitate*. 10.11.17-22); the *imago Dei* is never lost by man (*De Trin.* 14.8.11), but the *effigies* is the result of baptism, and actual participation in the Life of God. In connection with this passage, cf. below, 13.12.13.

that was well done for me, but I did not do well. I would not have learned, had I not been forced. Indeed, no one does well against his will, even though what he does is good. Nor did they who pushed me do well; rather, it was from Thee, O my God, that it was done well unto me. They did not discern to what end I might put the studies to which they forced me, other than to satiate the insatiable lusts felt by wealthy poverty and ignominious glory. Thou, of course, for whom the hairs of our heads are numbered,[54] didst use the mistake of all who urged me to study, for my own welfare; but Thou didst use my error of not wanting to study, for my punishment. And I, such a little boy and such a great sinner, was not unworthy of punishment. Thus, from those who did not do well, Thou didst do good unto me; from my own sinning, Thou didst grant me a just retribution. For, Thou hast commanded, and thus it is, that every disordered soul be its own proper punishment.

Chapter 13

(20) But, for what reason I detested the study of Greek,[55] to which I was introduced as a small boy, to this very day I

54 Cf. Matt. 10.30.

55 Critical opinion is somewhat divided on the question of the extent of Augustine's knowledge of Greek. He says: 'Indeed, I have acquired but a small grasp of the Greek language, practically nothing' (*Contra litt. Petiliani.* 2.38.91); cf. *De Trin.* 3.1.1. On the other hand, many Greek words are used with full understanding in his works; he did check Latin versions of the Bible with Greek codices; and he seems to have used some Greek treatises in writing the *City of God.* Cf. B. Altaner, 'Augustinus und die griechische Sprache,' *Pisciculi, F.J. Dölger dargeboten* (Münster 1939) 19-40; P. Guilloux, 'S. Augustin savait-il le grec?' *Rev. d'hist. eccl.* 21 (1925) 79-83; S. Angus, *Sources of the First Ten Books De Civ. Dei* (Princeton 1906). P. Courcelle, *Les lettres grècques en Occident de Macrobe à Cassiodore* (Paris 1943) 119-129,137-209, makes the reasonable suggestion that Augustine improved his Greek as he grew older.

cannot satisfactorily explain. For, I did like Latin, not what the elementary teachers taught, but what those who were called grammarians taught.[56] In fact, I considered those elementary studies, in which one learns reading, writing and counting, no less burdensome and painful than anything in Greek. Yet, whence is this, unless from sin and the vanity of life, by which I was 'flesh and a spirit that goeth and returneth not'?[57] Of course, those first studies of letters, by which there was developed in me, gradually and completely, that ability (which I still have) to read whatever I find in writing, and also to write what I wish, were better because more certain than those studies in which, forgetful of my own errors, I was compelled to remember I know not what errors of Aeneas, and to weep for a dead Dido,[58] because she killed herself for love—all this while I myself was dying, because of these things, in Thy sight, O Lord my Life, and in my utter wretchedness I carried on with dry eyes.

(21) What is more wretched than the wretch who is not aware of his own wretchedness, who sheds tears, indeed, for the death of Dido, which occurred because of her love of Aeneas, but who does not weep over his own death which occurs because he does not love Thee, O God, Light of my heart and Bread of the inner mouth of my soul, the manly Power who espouses my mind and the bosom of my thought? I was not in love with Thee and I was unfaithful to Thee,[59] and during my unfaithfulness the shout went up on all sides:

---

56 In the schools of Augustine's time, beginners were taught by a *primus magister;* the next level, by a *grammaticus;* the highest grade in the literary arts, by a *rhetor.*

57 Ps. 77.39.

58 Queen Dido, traditional founder of Carthage, to whom Aeneas tells his story in Vergil's *Aeneid* 2.

59 *fornicabar abs te*: Ps. 72.27. (The soul is said to fornicate when it turns away from God; the expression is consciously euphemized in the translation.)

'Well done, well done.'[60] For, the friendship of this world[61] is unfaithfulness to Thee, and 'Well done, well done' is shouted so that one may be ashamed unless he show himself a man in this way. I did not weep over these things, but I wept over Dido, 'who in dying had sought her end with the sword,'[62] myself seeking the end of Thy creature in my abandonment of Thee, going as earth unto earth. Had I been kept from the reading of these things, I should have been sad, because I could not read the things which would make me sad. Such madness is esteemed a study more honorable and more fruitful than that by which I learned to read and write.

(22) But now, let my God cry out in my soul and let Thy Truth say unto me: 'It is not so; it is not so.' That first instruction is indeed better. Consider: I am more ready to forget the errors of Aeneas, and all things of this kind, than writing and reading. Certainly, curtains hang over the entrances to the schools of grammar, but these signify not so much the honor of something hidden as the covering up of error. Let them not cry out against me, those whom I no longer fear, while I confess unto Thee what my soul wishes, O my God, and while I find rest in the condemnation of the evils of my ways,[63] so that I may choose the good things of Thy ways. Let them not cry out against me, the sellers or buyers of grammar, because, if I put them the question: whether it be true, as the poet says, that Aeneas at one time came to Carthage, the less learned will reply that they do not know but the more learned will even deny that it is true. But, should I ask with what letters the name of Aeneas is written, all who have learned these things will give me a true answer, according to that convention and voluntary agreement by

60 Ps. 39.16; 'Tis well, 'tis well (Douay-Challoner, 1941).
61 James 4.4.
62 *Aeneid* 6.457.
63 Jer. 18.11.

which men have established these signs among themselves. Again, if I ask which of the following one would suffer more in this life from forgetting—reading and writing, or those poetic fictions—who does not see what answer will be given by anyone who has not completely lost his senses?

And so, I sinned as a boy, when I set those foolish things higher in my affections than these which are more valuable, or, rather, when I hated these and loved those! Then, indeed, 'one and one are two, two and two are four' was a hateful sing-song, but very attractive was the vain image of a wooden horse filled with armed men, and the burning of Troy, and 'the shade of Creusa herself.'[64]

Chapter 14

(23) Why, then, did I hate Greek literature, when it sang of those same things? Homer also is skillful in composing fables of this kind and, though frivolous, is very pleasant, yet to me as a child he was bitter. I imagine Vergil is like that for Greek boys, when they are forced to study him as I was Homer. That, of course, is the difficulty, the real difficulty of all students of a foreign tongue; it was as if it sprinkled all the Greek sweetness of the fabulous stories with bitterness. I knew not one of those words, yet I was violently threatened with cruel tortures and punishments that I might learn.

Of course, there was a time as a baby when I certainly knew no Latin, yet I learned just by paying attention, without fear or suffering, amid the flattering words of my nurses, the pleasantries of smiling friends, and the joys of playmates. I learned it without the punishing burden of hard taskmasters, since my heart prompted me to bring forth its concepts, which would not have happened had I not learned some words, not

64 *Aeneid* 2.772.

from teachers but from ordinary speakers, and in their hearing I, too, began to express whatever I felt. It is clear enough from this that a free curiosity has greater force in learning these things than has the compulsion of fear. But, the flow of the former is restrained by the latter, under Thy laws, O God, under Thy laws; from the rods of schoolmasters right up to the trials of the martyrs; under Thy laws which are able to compound a healthful bitterness that calls us back to Thee and away from the pernicious pleasures by which we were drawn away from Thee.

Chapter 15

(24) 'Hear, O Lord, my supplication,'[65] lest my soul fail under Thy discipline, and lest I fail in confessing unto Thee Thy mercies, whereby Thou hast delivered me from all my worst ways, so that Thou mightest become more sweet to me than all the other attractions which I was seeking. Let me love Thee with all my strength, let me grasp Thy hand with all my heart strings, and I shall be delivered from all temptation unto the end.[66]

For, behold, Thou, O Lord, art 'my King and my God;'[67] let whatever of use which I learned as a boy be devoted to Thy service; that I speak and write and read and count, let this be devoted to Thy service. For, while I studied vain things, Thou gavest me instruction, and Thou hast forgiven me the sins of my delight in these vain things. I learned many useful words in them, but they can be learned in things which are not vain, and that is the safe way which boys should follow.

---

65 Ps. 60.2.
66 Cf. Ps. 17.30, combined with 1 Cor. 1.8.
67 Ps. 5.3.

Chapter 16

(25) Woe unto thee, O flood of human customs! Who will resist thee? How long will it be before thou driest up? How much farther wilt thou roll the sons of Eve unto that great and fearful sea, over which those can hardly pass who embark upon the wood of the Cross?[68] Did I not read in thee[69] of Jove both thundering and committing adultery? Both these things, of course, he could not have done, but it was contrived so, that there might be justification for real adultery, false thunder playing the pander.

Who, among these begowned[70] teachers, can listen undisturbed when a man[71] from their own dust declaims, saying: 'Homer invented these fictions and transferred human traits to the gods; I should prefer that divine ones be given to us.'[72] It is more truly said that he did, indeed, make up these fictions, yet thereby attributed divinity to disgraceful men, so that their disgraces would not be regarded as such, and that whoever did likewise would seem to be imitating the gods in heaven rather than abandoned men.

---

68 *lignum*: the cross of Christ, in Christian literature; see *Tract. in Joan.* 2.4: 'the way has been cut off by the floods of this world, and there is no means of crossing over to the homeland [Heaven], unless you are carried by the wood [*ligno*] . . . believe in the crucifix and you can reach it.'

69 Augustine is still addressing the 'flood of human customs.' He found an instance in Terence, quoted below. Here we read of a young man justifying his immorality by the example of Jove the thunderer, just in the way contemplated at the end of the present paragraph.

70 *paenulatorum magistrorum*: the *paenula* was a long cloak, sometimes worn in bad weather; Augustine may be expressing contempt.

71 F. J. Sheed, *Confessions* (New York 1943) 19, takes this declamer to be Cicero; it is more likely that Augustine means one of his own contemporaries speaking Cicero's lines; cf. De Labriolle, *Conf.* 1.21 n. 2, who suggests: *'quelque mime contemporain.'*

72 Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.26 (tr. Yonge, London 1853) 312: 'These were mere inventions of Homer, who gave his gods the imperfections of men. I would rather that he had given men the perfections of the gods!'

(26) Yet, O hellish flood, men's sons are thrown into thee, with their tuition fees, so that they may learn these things. This is an important business, when carried on publicly in the forum, in full view of the laws governing the payment of salaries[73] over and above fees. Thou beatest upon the stones along thy course and thy reverberations say: 'Here is where words are learned; here is where eloquence is gained, most essential for persuasion and for the development of opinions.' Thus, indeed, we should not have known words such as 'golden shower' and 'lap' and 'beguilement' and 'heavenly temples' and others written in that passage, unless Terence had presented a worthless youth who set up Jove before him as a model of lust, while looking at a picture painted on the wall. For, it was in this picture that Jove was depicted as 'descending in a golden shower to Danaë's lap, a woman to beguile.' And see how, as if by heavenly teaching, he stirs up violent desire with himself with these words:

> Yet, what a god! he said, who strikes the heavenly
>   temples with thunder from on high,
> Shall I, a little man, refrain from this? Indeed, I've
>   done it and rejoiced thereby.[74]

Not at all, these words are not at all to be learned more easily through this sort of ugliness. Rather, this vileness is more boldly perpetrated by means of these words. I do not accuse the words themselves, for they are like choice and precious vessels, but the wine of error which was poured into them for us by besotted teachers. Unless we drank it, we were beaten, with no appeal to a sober judge.

Yet, O my God, in whose sight my recollection is now

73 Salaries were usually paid by the municipalities, as was probably the case when Augustine taught rhetoric in Milan; cf. below, 5.13.23.
74 Terence, *Eunuch*. 584-591.

safe, I learned these things with pleasure, and delighted in them like an unhappy wretch. This was why I was said to be a very promising boy.

Chapter 17

(27) Allow me, O my God, to say something also of the mind with which I was endowed by Thee, and of the silly things on which I frittered it away. I was assigned an exercise, and this greatly disquieted me because of the sanctions of praise and demerit and of the fear of whippings. I was to speak the words of Juno,[75] angry and sorrowing at being unable to turn the king of the Trojans away from Italy.[76] I had heard that Juno never said these words. But we were forced to become wanton followers in the footsteps of the poet's fictions, and to say in prose what the poet had said in verse. It was customary to give more praise to the boy whose sentiment simulated best the anger and the sorrow worthy of the person being imitated and whose words suitably clothed his thought.

What was the value of that to me, O true Life, my God? What good was the acclaim which used to be given to my recitation, far more than to my many contemporaries and classmates? Were not all these things mere smoke and wind? Surely, there was something else on which my mind and tongue might have been exercised? Thy praises, O Lord, Thy praises, as found in Thy Scriptures, would have propped up the tender growth of my heart, and it would not have been

75 Weekly periods of recitation, or acting out, of scenes from the classics were customary in the schools. See J. W. Duff, *Literary History of Rome in the Silver Age* (New York 1927) 23-41; Quintilian, *Inst. orat.* 10.5.2.

76 Augustine here quotes Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.38.

carried off amid these trifling vanities,[77] the foul prey of winged things. One may sacrifice to the offending angels in more than one way.

Chapter 18

(28) Was it surprising, then, O my God, that I so abandoned myself to vanities and that I went so far away[78] from Thee, my God, when there were set before me for imitation men who were covered with shame if they were caught speaking incorrectly or ungrammatically of some deed of theirs which was not evil, but who gloried in the praise of the complete and properly ordered description of their obscenities, fully and ornately narrated?

Thou seest these things, O Lord, and art silent, 'long-suffering and plenteous in mercy'[79] 'and true.'[80] Wilt Thou always remain silent? Even now, Thou deliverest from this deep abyss the soul[81] which seeks Thee, which thirsts after Thy delights,[82] one whose 'heart says unto Thee: I have sought Thy face; Thy face, O Lord, will I still seek';[83] for the soul is far from Thy face when it is in the dark realm of passion. It is not that one moves away from Thee, or returns to Thee, on foot or by passing through physical distance. Nor did that younger son in Thy Gospel provide himself with horses, or chariots, or ships, or fly away on visible wings, or journey by walking, in order that through prodigal living in a distant region he might dissipate what Thou, a kind Father, had

77 Augustine deals more kindly with the study of rhetoric and the literary arts in *De doct. Christ.* 4.
78 That the soul, in this life, is a wanderer away from the One is also a recurrent theme in Plotinus; cf. *Ennead.* 6.9.7.
79 Ps. 102.8.
80 Ps. 85.15.
81 Cf. Ps. 85.13.
82 Cf. Ps. 41.3;15:11.
83 Ps. 26.8.

given him as he set out—kind in making him this gift, yet kinder still to him when he returned in want.[84] And so, to be in the realm of lustful passion is the same as to be in the realm of darkness, and that is the same as to be far away from Thy face.

(29) Observe, O Lord my God, with patience as is Thy wont, observe how carefully men's sons respect the conventions of letters and syllables received from the earlier users of the language, and how they neglect the eternal covenants of everlasting salvation received from Thee. Thus, he who upholds or teaches those old-established rules of speech causes more displeasure to man, if, in opposition to the rules of grammar, he fails to pronounce the Latin name for man [*homo*] without sounding an 'h' in the first syllable, than if, as a man, he hated another man in opposition to Thy rules. It is as if he felt that any human enemy was more dangerous than hate itself, through which he becomes angry against him, or as if one did more harm to another person by persecuting him than is done in one's own heart by hating. Surely, the science of letters is no more intimately present than that which is written in conscience:[85] that one is doing something to another which one would not wish to suffer oneself.

How mysterious art Thou, dwelling silently on the heights, O great and only God, sprinkling by unfailing law the punishment of blindness on illegal desires! Thus, a man who seeks fame as an orator before a human judge in the presence of many men attacks his enemy with deepest hatred, but very carefully avoids any error of speech, such as dropping an

---

84 This passage is a curious combination of the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15.11-32) and Neo-Platonic imagery (*Ennead.* 1.6.8).

85 Cf. Rom. 2.15. For the teaching that the divine law is written on men's hearts, see the important text in *De lib. arb.* 2.10.28-29. It is hardly possible that Augustine could have known the comment of St. Jerome (*In Ezech.* 1, *super* 1.6) where the term *synderesis* is used for the first time, for Augustine never uses the word.

initial 'h'; he is not concerned at the possibility that he may remove a man from the ranks of men by this frenzy of his mind.

Chapter 19

(30) As a boy, a poor unfortunate, I lay on the threshold of these customs. And in this arena was that school in which I was more afraid of an error in grammar than concerned, if I did so err, about envying those who avoided errors. I speak of these things and confess them to Thee, O my God, since it was for such things that I was praised by those men, and the goal of my life was to please them. I did not see the whirlpool of moral evil into which I was 'cast away from before Thy eyes.'[86]

What was more filthy in Thy sight than I, when I even displeased such men by telling countless lies to the servant in charge of me, to my teachers, and to my parents—moved by the love of games, fondness for the sight of frivolous shows, and by the disturbing process of imitating public spectacles. I also stole from my parents' cellar and table, either impelled by gluttony or in order to have something to give the boys who gave me in exchange the privilege of playing their game, in which they certainly took a pleasure equal to mine, yet nonetheless sold it. Even in this play, I frequently tried to win deceptive victories, because I was overcome by a vain desire for pre-eminence. What was I so unwilling to tolerate, and what did I argue about so fiercely, if I caught others doing it, except the same thing which I was doing to them? And if I myself was caught and shown to be guilty, I preferred to fight rather than to give way.

Is this the innocence of childhood? It is not, Lord; it is not

86 Ps. 30.23.

(I say it prayerfully),[87] O my God. These are the very things which pass from pedagogues and teachers, from the nuts and balls and birds of childish sport, to governors and kings, to gold, estates, and slaves—these very things pass in sequence with the successive years of growth to maturity, just as greater penalties take the place of the teacher's rod. It was only the symbol of humility, as exemplified in the low stature of childhood, that Thou didst approve, our King, when Thou saidst: 'For of such is the kingdom of heaven.'[88]

Chapter 20

(31) Nevertheless, O Lord, thanks are due Thee, our God, the most excellent and best Founder and Governor of the universe, even though Thou hadst wished me to be a boy only. For, even then, I was, I lived, and I had the power of sensing. I was concerned about my well-being, a vestige of that most hidden Unity,[89] whence I received my being. I took care of the integrity of my senses by means of my interior sense.[90] I delighted in truth, as found in these little things and in thoughts of little things. I did not want to be mistaken; I developed a good memory; I learned to speak well; I was consoled by friendship; I fled from suffering, dejection, and ignorance. Is it not wonderful and praiseworthy to be endowed with such life?

But, all these things are the gifts of my God; I did not give

87 *oro te*: Augustine almost forgets that he is talking to God, but he is so conscious of the intimate presence of God that he catches himself before it is too late and begs God's pardon for his vehemence of speech.

88 Matt. 19.14.

89 Compare the thought and language of Plotinus, *Ennead.* 3.8.10.

90 The *sensus interior* has, as one of its functions, to observe and judge the actions of the exterior senses (*sensus corporis*); cf. *De lib. arb.* 2.4.10-5.12.

them to myself. These are good things, and all these was I. And so, He is good who made me. He is Himself my good, and to Him I rejoice exceedingly for all the goods by which I existed, even as a boy.

But in this I sinned: I sought enjoyments, honors, and truths, not in Him but in His creatures,[91] myself and others. Thus did I blunder into sorrows, degradations, and errors. Thanks be to Thee, my Sweetness, my Honor, and my Confidence; O my God, thanks to Thee for Thy gifts. Do Thou preserve them for me. Thus wilt Thou preserve me, and what Thou hast given me will grow and be perfected. And I shall be with Thee myself, for even my existence was given me by Thee.

---

91 Cf. *Ennead.* 1.6.8.

BOOK TWO

Chapter 1

I WANT TO RECALL to mind my foul deeds of the past and the carnal corruptions of my soul—not because I love them, but in order that I may love Thee, O my God. I do this in the love of Thy love, mentally reviewing my nefarious ways in bitterness of personal recollection, so that Thou wilt bring sweetness to me, O Sweetness who are not false, O Sweetness happy and safe, who gatherest me in from the dispersion wherein I was divided and sundered, when I turned away from Thy Unity and wasted myself on the many.[1]

I burned, at that time of my youth, with the craving for hellish satisfactions. I shamelessly permitted myself to run wild through divers and shady loves. My beauty wasted away[2] and, while pleasing myself and desiring to give pleasure to the eyes of men, I became rotten before Thy eyes.

---

1 Cf. Plotinus, *Ennead.* 6.9.1-2; an excellent English version of this text from the *Enneads* is in G. H. Clark, *Selections from Hellenistic Philosophy* (New York 1940) 260-265.

2 Cf. Dan. 10.8.

Chapter 2

(2) What was it that delighted me, except to love and to be loved? But, the moderate relation of mind to mind was not maintained according to the bright bond of friendship; rather, the mists of slimy concupiscence of the flesh and of the bubbling froth of puberty rose like hot breath beclouding and darkening my heart. It thus was not possible to distinguish the serenity of joy from the dark mist of lust. Both [joy and lust] seethed together in hot confusion, and swept foolish youth over the precipice of passions and engulfed it in a whirlpool of shameful actions.

Thy anger prevailed over me, and I knew it not. I had grown deaf with the clanging of the chains of my mortality, a punishment for my pride of soul. I moved farther from Thee and Thou didst permit it. Through my fornications, I was scattered and poured out, and my ebullience was dissipated; and Thou wert silent. O my Joy, long-delayed! Thou wert silent then, and I still wandered far from Thee, through more and more sterile seeds of sorrow, proud in my debasement, disturbed in my weariness.

(3) Who might have moderated my wretchedness and turned to use the fleeting beauty of each latest attraction, setting a limit to their delights, so that the flood tide of my youth might be broken upon the shore of the marriage bond, if in those transient pleasures there might not be found the tranquility that is content with having the procreation of children as its end? This is the limitation Thy law prescribes, O Lord, Thou who dost also fashion the offspring of our mortality and by a light touch of Thy hand canst blunt the thorns which have no place in Thy paradise.[3] For Thy

3 See Gen. 3.18 for the introduction of the 'thorns' of labor and toil into the family life of Adam and his descendants. Augustine's later comment (*De Gen. ad litt.* 3.18.28; *De civ. Dei* 22.17) shows that he associates this verse of Genesis with Matt. 22.30, where it is said that

omnipotence is never far from us, even when we are far removed from Thee. Or I might have listened more carefully to Thy voice[4] thundering from the clouds: 'Yet such will have tribulation of the flesh. But I spare you that,'[5] and 'It is good for man not to touch woman,'[6] and 'He who is unmarried is concerned about the things of God, how he may please God; but he who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife.'[7] I might have more carefully listened to these words and, thus made a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven's sake,[8] I might have more happily awaited Thy embraces.

(4) But I, poor unfortunate, boiled over and, having left Thee, followed the violence of my flooding passions.[9] I broke the bonds of Thy lawful restrictions yet did not escape Thy punishments. What mortal can? Thou wert ever present, mercifully angry and befouling all my illicit pleasures with most bitter aversions, so that thus I might seek to enjoy inoffensive pleasure. Where could I have found this? Certainly not in anything outside of Thee, O Lord, not outside of Thee, 'who makest suffering into a lesson,'[10] who strikest that Thou mayest heal,[11] and who killest us lest we die apart from Thee.[12]

---

there will be no marriage in the future paradise of heaven. While the present passage stresses the difficulties of marriage, Augustine often wrote of the triple blessings of matrimony (mutual trust, offspring and the sacramental union); see especially *De Gen. ad litt.* 9.7.12; *Contra Julianum* 3.7.14; and the whole treatise *De bono conjugali*.

4 This is the 'voice' of Holy Scripture; cf. *De Gen. contra Manich.* 2.3.5; *Ennarr. in ps.* 56.11.17.

5 1 Cor. 7.28.

6 1 Cor. 7.1.

7 1 Cor. 7.32-33.

8 Cf. Matt. 19.12.

9 Cf. *Serm.* 119.3; 'Do not follow the flood of the flesh. This flesh is indeed a river, for it does not stand still.'

10 Ps. 93.20. Cf. *Enarr. in ps. loc. cit.* for the justification of the English.

11 Cf. Deut. 32.39.

12 Cf. above, Bk. 1 n. 19.

Where was I, and how long was I in exile from the delights of Thy household, in that sixteenth year of the life of my flesh, when, giving myself wholly to its service, I was controlled by the madness of sensuality, legitimate by human standards, but illicit in terms of Thy laws? Nor were my parents concerned to cut short my downfall with matrimony; rather, they were wholly concerned with my learning to make as good a speech as possible and to be persuasive in the use of words.[13]

Chapter 3

(5) My studies were interrupted during that year, when I was brought back from Madaura,[14] in which nearby city I had, as a boarding student, already commenced the study of literature and public speaking, and the funds to pay the expenses of a longer stay in Carthage were being assembled, more by means of the ambition than the wealth of my father, who was a far from rich citizen of Tagaste.[15]

To whom am I telling these things? Not to Thee, O my God; rather, I tell them before Thee to my own kind, to the human race, no matter how few men may happen upon these pages. For what reason? So that I, and whoever reads this, may realize out of what depths one must cry unto Thee.[16] What is closer to Thy ears than a heart that is penitent and a life founded on faith?[17]

13 The key to a good position in government service, during the late Roman Empire, was a training in rhetoric and law.

14 The present Mdaourouch, a town in Numidia, some twenty miles south of Augustine's birthplace. Madaura was the home of the Latin writer Apuleius (2nd cent. A.D.), and remained a center of pagan learning.

15 The present Souk-Ahras, about fifty miles south of Hippo, which is the present town of Bône.

16 Cf. Ps. 129.1: the famous lines, *De profundis clamavi ad te.*

17 Cf. Hab. 2.4; Heb. 10.38; Rom. 1.17; Gal. 3.11.

Who did not then sing the praises of this man, my father, who in a manner beyond his ordinary means provided his son with whatever was needed for a long stay away from home for the sake of an education? Many far wealthier citizens never undertook such a task for their children. But, at the same time, this same father was quite unconcerned as to how I was growing up before Thee, or as to how chaste I might be, as long as I were a dissertator—or, rather, a deserter from Thy tillage,[18] O God, who art the one, true and good Lord of Thy field, which is my heart.

(6) However, in that sixteenth year, when idleness was forced upon me by the straitness of my family's fortunes, I was free from school and lived with my parents. The thorn-bushes of lust grew above my head, and there was no hand to root them out. On the contrary, when my father saw me at the baths, growing into a young man and taking on the appearance of restless adolescence, he joyfully apprised my mother of it, as if this already gave him reason to rejoice in the hope of grandchildren. His was the drunken joy in which this world becomes forgetful of Thee, its Creator, and loves Thy creature in place of Thee,[19] as a result of the invisible wine of a will perverted and inclined to base things. But, Thou hadst already begun Thy temple and started Thy holy dwelling in my mother's breast, while he was but a catechumen,[20] and that but recently. She thus experienced a rising feeling of holy fear and trembling for me; though I was not yet one of the faithful, she nevertheless feared the crooked ways in which they walk who turn their back and not their face to Thee.[21]

(7) Alas for me! Do I dare to say that Thou wert silent, O my God, when I wandered still farther from Thee? Didst

18 Cf. 1 Cor. 3.9
19 Cf. Rom. 1.25.
20 Augustine's father, Patricius, remained a pagan until shortly before his death in 370; cf. below, 9.9.22.
21 Jer. 2.27.

Thou really refrain from speaking to me then? Whose words but Thine were those which Thou didst sing into my ears through the medium of my mother, Thy faithful follower? Not that any of them went into the depths of my heart and won my compliance. For her desire it was, and she secretly reminded and most carefully admonished me, that I should not indulge in fornication and, above all, not commit adultery with the wife of any man.

Of course, these seemed to me to be words of womanly advice and I would have been ashamed to obey them. But they were Thy words and I did not know, for I thought that Thou wert silent, and that only she was talking through whom Thou didst not fail to speak to me. So, in her Thou wert despised[22] by me—by me, her son, the son of Thy handmaid,[23] by Thy servant. But, I did not know and I went rashly along in such blindness that I was ashamed to be less wanton than my contemporaries, for I used to hear them boasting about their shameful exploits. The more evil these youths were, the more they boasted, and I was pleased not only by the evil pleasure of action but by the pleasure of boasting. What but vice is deserving of vituperation?[24] I became more vicious, so that I would not be vituperated and, when my conduct did not match the wickedness of my associates, I pretended to have perpetrated deeds which I had not performed, lest I would appear inferior because I was more innocent, lest I be considered viler because I was more chaste.

(8) Such were the companions with whom I walked the streets of Babylon,[25] wallowing in mud as if in cinnamon and

22 Cf. 1 Thess. 4.8; 2 Sam. 12.9.
23 Ps. 115.16.
24 Derived from *'vitium-paratio,'* i.e., vice finding. Here, as often, Augustine is playing on words.
25 Symbol of a wicked city in which false gods are worshiped; see next note.

precious ointments. And in order that I might be more firmly mired in the very center of that city, my invisible enemy trod roughshod over me and seduced me, for I was easily seduced. For, not even she, the mother of my flesh, who had already fled from the midst of Babylon,[26] but delayed upon its borders, as she advised me to be modest, was sufficiently concerned by what her husband had told her about me to restrain within the limit of conjugal affection, if it could not be cut back to the quick, what she realized to be a present disease and a future danger. She did not take care to do this, because she was afraid that my hopes would be impeded by the hindrances of family life—not that hope in a future life which my mother reposed in Thee, but the hope for success in literary pursuits, which both my parents desired too much that I should attain: my father, since he had practically no thought of Thee, and for me but vain plans; my mother, because she was of the opinion that these customary studies would be not only no hindrance, but even of some help, to attain Thee.

Thus do I attempt to reconstruct, in so far as I am able, the attitudes of my parents. Furthermore, the reins were loosened over me so that my play went beyond the moderation of strictness to the disintegration of diverse passions. And amid all these, O my God, there was a cloud which obscured for me the clarity of Thy Truth. And my 'iniquity was coming forth as it were from fatness.'[27]

Chapter 4

(9) Without doubt, Thy Law punishes theft, O Lord, and

26 Jer. 50.8; 51.6.
27 Ps. 72.7.

so does the law which is written in the hearts of men,[28] which even iniquity itself does not erase. For, what thief will suffer theft from another thief without protest? Not even he who has plenty when the other has stolen under the impulse of want. But I, I wanted to steal, and I did it compelled by no want, unless it be by my lack of justice and disgust thereat and my plentitude of iniquity. For, I stole what I already possessed in abundance and of much better quality. Nor did I desire to enjoy the thing itself which was the object of my inclination to steal, but the very act of stealing, the sin itself.[29]

There was a pear tree near our vineyard which was laden with fruit that was attractive neither in appearance nor in taste. In the dead of night[30]—for we had prolonged our playing in the vacant lots, according to our usual unhealthy custom, until then—we crept up to it, a gang of youthful good-for-nothings, to shake it down and despoil it. We carried away huge loads, not as a treat for ourselves, but just to throw to the pigs. Of course, we did eat a few, but we did so only to be doing something which would be pleasant because forbidden.

Look at my heart, O God, look at my heart, which Thou

---

28 This 'law written in the hearts of men' becomes in the thirteenth century the important *natural moral law;* for its history, see O. Lottin, *Le droit naturel chez s. Thomas et ses prédécesseurs* (2me éd., Bruges 1931). Cf. above, 1.18.29.

29 Augustine is particularly struck with the fact that there is never a good, or adequate, reason for a morally evil act. The theft of the pears, which appears trivial to many readers, is simply a good example of this fact: the so-called motives for sin are always trivial; there can be no important reason for turning away from God and spurning Him for the sake of lesser goods. Cf. R. Jolivet, *Le Problème du mal chez s. Augustin* (Archives de Philosophie, Paris, 1930 7.2); for Augustine's general theory of morality the best study is J. Mausbach, *Die Ethik des hl. Augustinus* (Freiburg i. B. 1929) 2 Bd

30 *Enarr. in ps. 118.* Serm. 29.3: Augustine explains that midnight is called *nox intempesta* because it is not a time suitable for the deed of people who are awake.

hast pitied in the depths of the abyss. Look at my heart; may it tell Thee now what it sought in this—that I might be evil without any compensation and that for my evil there might be no reason except evil. It was filthy and I loved it. I loved my own destruction. I loved my own fault; not the object to which I directed my faulty action, but my fault itself, was what I loved, my vile soul leaping down from Thy support into extinction, not shamefully coveting anything, but coveting shame itself.

Chapter 5

(10) There is truly a sightliness in beautiful bodies, in gold and silver and all things. In the realm of tactual sensations, congruity is the most important. And in each of the other senses there is its own agreeable quality. Even earthly honor has its own worthiness, as does the power to command and control, which gives rise to a craving for vengeance. Nevertheless, one must not depart from Thee, O Lord, nor deviate from Thy law, in all these objects of desire. Even the life which we live here possesses its own appeal, arising from a mode of beauty which is its own and from a suitableness in relation to all these lower things of beauty.[31] So, too, friendship among human beings brings sweetness through the loving knot whereby from many minds a union is formed.

Sin arises from all these and similar things, when because of an immoderate leaning to these lowest of goods, the better and higher are deserted,[32] Thou our Lord God, and Thy Truth and Thy Law. Indeed, these lowest things have their

31 Augustine's early treatise *De pulchro et apto* is lost, but we know from his discussion of it (below, 4.14.21) that he distinguished two kinds of beauty: (a) the pure beauty of a thing which is attractive in itself; (b) the beauty of a thing which is aptly, or harmoniously, related to other things.

32 Cf. *De lib. arb.* 3.1.2.

delights, but not like my God, who made all things, for in Him the righteous man rejoices; He is the joy of the upright in heart.[33]

(11) So, when an inquiry is made concerning a crime, it is not usual to give credence to any reason why it was done unless it is apparent that there was a craving to attain one of those goods which we have called the lowest, or a fear of losing them. For, they are beautiful and attractive, even though common and low in comparison with higher and blessed goods.

Someone has killed a man. Why did he do it? He coveted the victim's wife or his goods, or he desired to commit robbery so as to make a living, or he was afraid of this man causing him to lose something, or he had been injured and burned for revenge. Would he have killed a man without a motive, just out of love of homicide itself? Who would believe this? Of course, they do tell about a certain demented and very cruel man[34] that he was evil and cruel for no reason at all. Yet, even in his case, there was a reason: 'Lest through inaction,' he said, 'my hand or mind grow torpid.'[35] Now, how does that explain it? Why? In order that, as a result of this exercise in evil-doing, having taken over the city,[36] he might attain honors, power, and wealth, and gain release from the fear of the laws and the straitened circumstances caused by his poverty and his own consciousness of his crimes. Therefore, not even Catiline himself loved his own crimes, but something else, for the sake of which he committed them.

Chapter 6

(12) But I, what did I, poor wretch, love in you, O my

33 Cf. Ps. 63.11.
34 L. Sergius Catilina (108?-62 B.C.) was one of the most depraved characters in Roman history; his story is eloquently told in Cicero's four *Orationes in L. Catilinam*.
35 Sallust, *De Cat.* 16.
36 The city of Rome.

act of theft—O my nocturnal crime committed in my sixteenth year? You were not beautiful, for you were theft. Or, are you anything at all, that I may speak to you? The fruits which we stole were beautiful, because they were Thy creatures, O Beauty beyond compare, Creator of all things, Good God, God the highest Good and my True Good. The fruits were beautiful, but my wretched soul did not lust for them. I had an abundance of better ones, but I plucked these merely for the sake of stealing. For, as soon as they were plucked, I threw them away, only enjoying the feast of my iniquity, in which I rejoiced. If any bit of that fruit entered my mouth, the crime was what made it tasty.

And now, O my Lord God, I want to know what did delight me in the theft. There was no beauty in it. I do not mean as in equity and prudence; nor even as in the mind of man, and in memory, the senses, and the life of the body; nor yet as the stars are beautiful and their collocations attractive, and, as are the earth and sea, full of unborn things which, by being born, ever replace those which die; nor, finally, as there is a partial and shady beauty in the deceptive allures of vice.

(13) Pride mimics loftiness, whereas Thou art the one God, lifted above all things. Ambition, too, what does it seek but honors and glory, whereas Thou art alone to be honored beyond all things and glorious for eternity? The cruelty of powerful men desires to be feared, but who should be feared except God alone? For, what can be snatched or withdrawn from Thy power—when, or where, or whither, or by what means can this be done? The caresses of wanton men are desirous of a return of love, but nothing is more caressing than Thy charity, nor is anything loved more healthfully than Thy truth, which is beautiful and bright above all things. Curiosity appears to mimic scientific study, while Thou knowest all in the highest way. Even ignorance itself and stupidity are

dressed up in the name of simplicity and innocence, but nothing can be found more simple than Thou. What is more innocent than Thou, since the things which injure evil men are their own works. Sloth inclines to a kind of rest, but what is true rest apart from the Lord? Lust craves to be called satisfaction and abundance, but Thou indeed art fullness and the unceasing plenty of incorruptible sweetness. Wasteful spending hides under the shadow of liberality, but Thou art the most bountiful Giver of all good things. Avarice wishes to have many possessions; Thou dost possess all things. Envy quarrels over excellence; what is more excellent than Thou? Anger seeks revenge; who attains vindication[37] more justily than Thou? Fear grows horrified at the unaccustomed and unexpected aspect of things which threaten what it loves, being concerned for its own safety. But what is unusual to Thee, what is unexpected? Who takes from Thee what Thou lovest? Where is unshakeable safety, unless with Thee? Sorrow pines away at the loss of things in which passionate longing had its delight, desiring to be immune, as Thou art, from the possibility of anything being taken from it.

(14) Thus does the soul fornicate, when it is averted[38] from Thee to seek, away from Thee, the things which are not found pure and clean, unless it return to Thee. Perversely do all men imitate Thee, if they remove themselves far from Thee and set themselves up against Thee.[39] But, even in thus imitating Thee, they show that Thou art the Creator of all nature and that it is therefore not possible to get away from Thee completely.

What, then, did I love in that theft, and what did I imitate

---

37 Cf. Rom. 12.19.

38 Just as *conversion* is the condition of the soul whose gaze is turned to God, so *aversion* is the condition of the soul turning away from God. It is the will which so 'turns' the soul. Augustine uses many words formed from *-versio* (*conversio, aversio, perversio, subversio,* etc.) with this theory in mind.

39 Cf. *De Trin.* 11.5.8.

my Lord, though viciously and perversely? Was it pleasing to act against the law by means of deception, because I was unable to do so by strength, and, a captive, to make a lame pretence of liberty by doing unscathed what was not permitted, in shady semblance of omnipotence? Here, indeed, is that slave who flees from his lord and reaches a shadow.[40] Oh, the rottenness, oh, the monstrosity of life and the bottomless depths of death! Was it possible to take pleasure in what was against the law, not for any reason, except that it was against the law?

Chapter 7

(15) 'What shall I render to the Lord,'[41] for the fact that my soul feels no fear when my memory recalls these things? I will love Thee, O Lord, and give thanks and confess unto Thy Name,[42] for Thou hast forgiven me such evil and wicked deeds. To Thy grace and Thy mercy do I attribute the fact that Thou hast melted away my sins like ice. So, also, to Thy grace do I attribute whatever evil things I did not do, for what could I not have done, who even loved an evil action for itself?

So, I confess that all has been forgiven me, both the evil things which I did of my own accord and the things I failed to do under Thy guidance. Who is there among men who, considering his own weakness, dares to attribute his chastity and innocence to his own power, so as to love Thee less, as if he had less need of that mercy of Thine by which Thou forgivest sins to those who have been converted to Thee? Let him, who has been called by Thee and has followed Thy voice and avoided these things which he reads in my recollection and confession concerning myself, not think derisively of me

40 Cf. Job 7.2, where (as can be seen from the *Annot. in Job.* ad loc.) Augustine reflects not the Vulgate but the Old Latin text.
41 Ps. 115.12.
42 Cf. Ps. 53.8.

because I was restored to health by the same Physician by whom it was granted that he not be ill or, rather, that he be less gravely ill. Let him love Thee as much as I do or, rather, even more, because he sees my release from the grievous pains of my sins to have been effected by the very One who permitted him not to be bound by such pains.

Chapter 8

(16) What fruit[43] did I, wretched man, derive from these things, which I now blush to recall, particularly in that act of theft, in which I loved the theft itself and nothing else, since it was itself nothing and I became more wretched through it? Yet, I would not have done it by myself (that is my recollection of my mind at the time); I certainly would not have done it alone. Therefore, I also loved in it the companionship of those with whom I did it. So, I did love something other than the theft, or, rather, I really did not, for that companionship was itself nothing.

What is it, really? Who is there who may teach me, except Him who enlightens my heart[44] and sees through its shadows? What is it that incites my mind to seek, to discuss, and to consider? For, if I loved those pears that I stole, and desired to enjoy them, I could also, if that were enough, have done by myself that evil act by which I might achieve my pleasure. I would not have needed to inflame the itch of my sense desire by the interfriction of guilty minds. But, since there was no pleasure for me in those pears, the pleasure was in the evil act itself; it arose from the companionship of those who sinned together with me.

---

43 Rom. 6.21.
44 Cf. Eccli. 2.10.

Chapter 9

(17) What was this mental disposition? For, of course, it was clearly very wicked and unfortunate for me who possessed it. Still, what was it? 'Who can understand sins?'[45]

We had our laugh (and our hearts were, so to speak, tickled) at deceiving people who did not think we would do such things and who were very much opposed to them. Why did I find pleasure in the fact that I was not doing it alone? Was it because no one is prone to laugh when all alone? True, no one does so readily, yet laughter sometimes does overcome men all alone by themselves, with no other person present, if something which is unusually ridiculous strikes the senses or the mind. But, I would not have done this alone; certainly, I would not have done it alone.

Behold, O my God: the lively recollection of my soul is open before Thee. Alone, I would not have committed that theft, in which my pleasure came not from what I stole, but from the fact that I was stealing. It would have given me no pleasure to do it alone, nor would I have done it. O friendship most unfriendly, inscrutable seduction of the mind, craving to do harm as a game and a joke, inclination to deprive others arising from no motive of personal gain or of revenge! Someone just says: 'Let's go; let's do it!' and one is ashamed not to be unashamed.

Chapter 10

(18) Who can undo this most tortuous and complicated knot? It is foul. I do not want to pay attention to it. I do not want it in my sight. I desire Thee, O Justice and Innocence,

45 Ps. 18.13.

beautiful and comely to eyes that see aright, source of satisfaction that does not cloy. Rest is indeed with Thee, and untroubled life. He who enters into Thee enters into the joy of his Lord,[46] he shall not fear and he shall be best situated in the Best Being. I myself slipped away from Thee, my God, and in my youth I strayed too deviously from Thy firm support, and so I became a barren desert unto myself.[47]

46 Matt. 25.21.
47 Cf. Luke 15.14.

BOOK THREE

Chapter 1

To Carthage I came, and a hissing cauldron[1] of shameful loves seethed around me on all sides. I was not in love, yet I loved to love and, in the hidden depths of unsated desire, I hated myself for my partial lack of desire. I sought some object that I might love, loving the very act of love; I hated peace of mind and a path unbeset by pitfalls.[2] For, though I was hungry within me with the lack of that inner food which is Thyself, my God, I experienced no longing as a result of that hunger. Rather, I lacked the desire for incorruptible nourishment, not because I was filled with it, but, the more empty I was, the greater my loathing became. And that is why my soul was unhealthy and, in its ulcerated condition, projected itself into the open,[3]

1 The assonance of *Carthago . . . sartago* can hardly be reproduced in English. Many ancient writers have commented on the licentiousness of life in Carthage. Salvian, writing in the fifth century, said: 'What portion of the city was not filled with indecency, what street or path within the city was not a brothel?' (*The Governance of God* 7.17, trans. J. F. O'Sullivan in this series, New York 1947).

2 Cf. Wisd. 14.11.

3 Cf. *De vera relig.* 39.72.

wretchedly desirous of being scraped[4] in friction with sensible things. Yet, if they had no soul, they would certainly not have been loved.

To love and to be loved was far sweeter to me, if I also succeeded in enjoying my beloved in the flesh. Thus, I muddied the waters of friendship with the filth of concupiscence, and I beclouded its brightness with the scum of lust. Yet, though filthy and unsightly, I strove in excessive vanity to appear refined and polished. So, I plunged headlong into love and desired to be taken over by it. O my God, my Mercy, with how much bitterness didst Thou, in Thy goodness, sprinkle that which was sweet to me![5] For, I was loved and I both achieved in secret the bond of enjoyment and was joyfully tied down by the entwinements of calamity, to be beaten with iron rods, burning with jealousy, suspicions, and fears, with fits of anger and quarrels.

Chapter 2

(2) Theatrical shows, filled with depictions of my miseries and with tinder for my own fire, completely carried me away. What is it that makes a man want to become sad in beholding mournful and tragic events which he himself would not willingly undergo?[6] Yet, as he watches, he wishes to suffer their sorrow; this sorrow is his own pleasure. What is this but a wretched weakness of mind? For, the less sane a person is in regard to such feelings, the more he is moved by these things; although, when he himself suffers, it is usually called misery; when he suffers for others, compassion.[7] But, what

---

4 Cf. Job 2.7-8.

5 Cf. Plato, *Gorgias* 509. For 'my Mercy,' cf. Ps. 143.2.

6 Augustine seems here to be unaware of Aristotle's theory of *catharsis* (*Poetics* 6.1049b27). Rather, he seems to agree with Plato (*Rep.* 10.606) on the debilitating influence of passions.

7 *misericordia*: Augustine explains this word for mercy or compassion in *De morib. eccl. Cath.* 27.53: 'Who does not know that *misericordia*

kind of compassion is in the make-believe things of the theatre? A member of the audience is not incited to give help; rather, he is simply enticed to feel sorrow: the more sorrowful he becomes, the more highly does he regard the author of those presentations. Thus, if these calamitous events of the men of old, or of fiction, are so presented that the spectator is not moved to sorrow, he goes away scornful and critical; but, if he does become sorrowful, he remains, giving full attention and enjoying it.

(3) Tears, then, and sorrows are loved. Every man, of course, desires to be joyful. Or is it that, though no one takes pleasure in being miserable, one still may be pleased by being compassionate, which is not possible without sorrow, and for this one reason sorrows are loved?

This, too, springs from that stream of friendship. But where is it going; whither does it flow? Why does it rush down into that torrent of boiling pitch,[8] seething horribly in vile lusts, in which it is itself transformed and turned by its own inclination from heavenly calm into a twisted and debased thing? Shall compassion, then, be repudiated? Not at all. Sorrows, then, may at times be loved. But, beware of uncleanness, my soul, under the direction of my God, 'the God of our father,'[9] praiseworthy and exalted above all throughout the centuries—beware of uncleanness.

Not that I am without sympathy now, but at that time I rejoiced along with the lovers in the theaters when they came to enjoy each other shamefully, although these were but the imaginary events of a stage play, and I suffered with them in a semblance of pity when they lost each other. I enjoyed both experiences. Now, of course, I have more pity for the man who rejoices in evil-doing than for the man who sup-

gets its name from the fact that it makes the heart [*cor*] miserable [*miserum*] in one who is sorry for the evil which befalls another?

8 Cf. Isa. 34.9.

9 Dan. 3.52.

poses himself afflicted with hardships through the loss of dangerous enjoyment and the forfeiting of some miserable felicity. This is definitely a truer compassion, but sorrow finds in it no place for pleasure. For, though he who sorrows for the unfortunate is commended for a work of charity, he who is sincere in his compassions would much prefer to have no reason for feeling sorrow. If there were such a thing as malevolent benevolence, which is impossible, then he who truly and sincerely feels compassion could desire people to be unhappy so that he might feel compassion for them. So, while sorrow is sometimes laudable, it is never to be loved. Thus it is that Thou, O Lord God who lovest souls, hast compassion far more exalted and pure and incorruptible than ours, for the very reason that Thou art not injured by any sorrow. 'And for such offices, who is sufficient?'[10]

(4) But at that time, I, wretched man, loved to feel sorrow and sought out something to be sorrowful about. In the fictitious and theatrical depiction of another's misfortune, an actor's performance more greatly pleased me and more strongly attracted me the more tears were drawn from me. Now, is it surprising that I grew loathsome with this vile mange, unfortunate beast that I was, straying from Thy flock, impatient of Thy care? Hence arose my love of suffering, not of the kind that would affect me deeply (for I had no desire to be afflicted with the things which I saw), but such as would supply, as it were, a superficial scratching as I listened to those fictions. Yet, an inflamed sore, and putrefaction, and blood poisoning followed, as if from the scratches of finger nails. Such was my life—or was it life, O my God?

10 2 Cor. 2.16.

Chapter 3

(5) Thy faithful mercy hovered over me from far above. How great the wickedness on which I wasted myself! What sacrilegious curiosity did I pursue, as, in deserting Thee, it led me to the deepest unfaithfulness and to the spurious cults of demons, to whom I offered up my wicked deeds. Yet, in all Thou didst continue to scourge me! I even dared to desire and accomplish during the celebration of Thy solemn services, within the walls of the church,[11] an affair which deserved the fruit of death.[12] For that Thou didst beat me with heavy punishments, but nothing in comparison with my offense, O Thou my very great Mercy, O my God, my Refuge from the frightening dangers through which I wandered, stiff-necked with over-confidence, ever departing farther from Thee, loving my own ways and not Thine, loving a fleeting freedom.

(6) Now, these studies which are customarily called honorable have as their aim to prepare one for lawsuits in the forum. Excellence in them required that my success be measured by deception. Such is the blindness of men who glory even in blindness! I was now a leader in the school of rhetoric and I proudly rejoiced and was puffed up with vanity—though much more restrained (Thou knowest, O Lord) and no participant in the riotous pranks which were accomplished by the 'overturners'[13] (for this perverse and devilish name

11 This would suggest that Augustine attended Catholic church services while in Carthage, at least during his first year there.

12 Cf. Rom. 7.6.

13 *eversores*: many efforts have been made to find an English equivalent; wreckers (Bigg), subverters (Pusey), Mohawks (Ottley); Sheed uses the Latin and adds 'overturners,' which is the literal meaning. This is another instance of the use of a combination with *-versio* to name some 'turning' of the will; cf. above, Bk. 2 n. 38; the actions of the *eversores* were *e-versiones*.

was the mark of urbanity) among whom I lived shamelessly and yet with shame, for I was not really one of them.[14] Yet, I did associate with them and sometimes delighted in their friendship, but I was always disgusted by their actions, that is, by their 'overturnings' by which they insolently tormented the modesty of the uninitiated, which they outraged without reason save to make sport and thence to feed their malicious mirth. Nothing is more like the acts of demons than such behavior. So, what truer name for them than 'overturners': were they not wholly overturned first of all, and perverted by the deceiving spirits, who mocked them and seduced them from within, in precisely the same way that those boys loved to mock and deceive others?

Chapter 4

(7) In the company of such persons, at that unstable period of my life, I was studying the books of oratory, in which I was eager to excel, because of a detestable and empty purpose, a joy in human vanity. In the regular course of study. I came upon the book of a certain[15] Cicero, whose tongue nearly all admire, but not his heart. But that book of his contained an exhortation to philosophy. It was called *Hortensius*.[16]

In fact, that book changed my mental attitude, and

14 Vincentius, a Rogatist opponent of Augustine, knew him as a student in Carthage and admitted much later that Augustine was a quiet, well-behaved student; cf. Augustine, *Epist.* 93.13.51.

15 *cujusdam*: the use may be pejorative, but it is also possible that Augustine felt many readers would not know of Cicero; in *Epist.* 118.9, he remarks that he could not find a copy of Cicero in Hippo.

16 Cicero's *Hortensius* is not extant; some few fragments are known, mostly through the following works of A.: *Contra acad.* 3.14.31; *De beat. vita* 10; *Solil.* 1.17; *De civ. Dei* 3.15; *Contra Julian. Pelag.* 4.15.78; *De Trin.* 13.4.7; 13.5.8; 14.9.12; 14.19.26; *Epist.* 130.10.

changed the character of my prayers to Thyself, O Lord. It altered my wishes and my desires. Suddenly, every vain hope became worthless to me and I yearned with unbelievable ardor of heart for the immortality of wisdom. I began to rise up,[17] so that I might return to Thee. For, it was not to sharpen my tongue (this was the apparent object being bought at my mother's expense, for I was in my nineteenth year and my father had died two years before)—it was not, I say, to sharpen my tongue that I used that book. It was not its style of speech which influenced me, but, rather, what it spoke about.

(8) How ardent was my desire, O my God, how ardent my desire to fly back to Thee from earthly things. I was unaware of what Thou wert doing with me. For, wisdom dwells with Thee.[18] The love of wisdom bears the Greek name, philosophy, and it was with this love that that book enkindled me. There are those who lead one astray by means of philosophy, coloring and disguising their errors with a great, and alluring, and honorable name. Nearly all the people of that kind who existed in his own and former times are revealed and censured in that book. In it, also, is manifested the saving admonition of Thy Spirit spoken through Thy good and devout servant:[19] 'Beware, lest any man deceive you through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the traditions of men, and according to the elements of this world and not according to Christ. For in Him all the fullness of the Godhead dwells corporeally.'

And at that time, Thou knowest, O Light of my heart, since this passage from the Apostle was not yet known to me, what brought me relish in this exhortation [of Cicero] was that I was excited and aroused and inflamed to love, seek

17 Cf. Luke 15.18-20.

18 Cf. Job 12.13. In the following sentence Augustine uses the Greek word *philosophia,* the love of wisdom; traditionally, Pythagoras was the first to use the name *philósophos,* lover of wisdom.

19 St. Paul, Col. 2.8-9.

after, attain, and strongly embrace,[20] not this or that philosophic school, but wisdom itself, whatever it is. The only thing to dim my ardor was the fact that the name of Christ was not there, for this name, by Thy mercy, O Lord, this name of my Saviour, Thy Son, my youthful heart had drunk in piously with my mother's milk and until that time had retained it in its depths; whatever lacked this name could not completely win me, howsoever well expressed, and polished, and true appearing.

Chapter 5

(9) So, I decided to direct my attention to the Holy Scriptures, to see what they were like. Behold, I see a thing not open to the proud nor revealed to children, lowly on first being approached, but exalted on being further broached, and veiled in mysteries. But, I was not such that I could lower my head for its doorway, so as to enter it. I did not feel the same about turning to the Scripture as I now do in speaking of it. Rather, it seemed to me unworthy of being compared with the Ciceronian standard of worth. My unhealthy pride shunned its style and my intellectual vision[21] failed to penetrate its inner parts. True, this vision is such that it grows along with children, but disdained to be a child, and, inflated with arrogance, I thought myself grown-up.

---

20 Note that in this series of verbs we have a well-reasoned progression toward appetitive fulfillment: ut *diligerem* et *quaererem* et *adsequerer* et *tenerem* atque *amplexarer* fortiter. Compare the Thomistic series: *amor, intentio, consensus, electio, usus, fruitio,* and the discussion of its background, in V. J. Bourke, *St. Thomas and the Greek Moralists* (Milwaukee 1947) 15-21.

21 *acies* [*mentis or cogitantis*]: in the sense order, the *acies* denotes the active gaze, going from the eye through even darkness, searching out its object (*Enarr. in ps.* 16.8); similarly, in the *visio intellectualis* (*De Gen. ad lit.* 12.14.29), the *acies* is the gaze of the mind, actively piercing through intelligible darkness (*De Trin.* 11.4.7).

Chapter 6

(10) Thus did I fall among men[22] mad with pride, extremely carnal and talkative, in whose mouths were the snares of the Devil, smeared with a sticky mixture of the syllables of Thy name and that of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the Paraclete[23] our Consoler,[24] the Holy Spirit. These names never left their lips, but were empty sound and the rattling of the tongue; for the rest, their heart was void of truth. They kept saying: 'Truth, truth,' and they said it often to me, yet it was never in them.[25] Rather, they continually spoke false things, not only of Thee, who art truly the Truth, but also of the elements of this world, Thy creatures. I should even have passed by for the sake of Thy love the philosophers who do speak the truth about such things, O my Father, the highest Good, the Beauty of all things beautiful.[26]

O Truth, Truth—how deeply even then did the marrow of my mind long for Thee, when they sounded Thy Name to me, frequently and many times in mere words and in many and huge books! These were the dishes on which were

22 These men were Manichees, or Manichaeans, followers of the Persian religious learder, Manes or Mani (A.D. 215-275)), who established a new religion containing elements borrowed from Zoroastrianism, the Gnosticism of Marcion, and the doctrine of the New Testament. Cf. P. Alfaric, *Les écritures manichéennes* (Paris 1918) 1.16-25, for the most precise details of the life of Mani. F. C. Burkitt, *The Religion of the Manichees* (Cambridge 1925) is still the best account in English.

23 On the claim of Mani to be the Paraclete and the last of the 'Apostles' of Christ, cf. Alfaric, *op. cit* 1-21, and Augustine *De haeresibus* 46.

24 Cf. John 14.16. The opening lines of the *Fundamental Epistle* (which Alfaric, *op. cit.* 2.58, identifies tentatively with the *Farakmatija,* known through the Arabic scholar An Nadim) are: 'Mani, Apostle of Jesus Christ, by the Providence of God the Father . . . Cf. Augustine, *Contra Epist. Man.* 14, and Alfaric, *op. cit.* 2.60.

25 Cf. *De util. cred.* 1.2, where Augustine explains to Honoratus that he was originally attracted by the pseudo-rationalism of the Manichaeans.

26 Cf. Plotinus, *Ennead.* 6.9.4.

brought to me, who was starving for Thee, the sun and moon[27] and Thy beautiful works, instead of Thee; Thy works and not Thee, not even the first of these. For, Thy spiritual works are prior to these bodies, no matter how shining and celestial.

But I was hungry and thirsty, not for these first things, but for Thyself, O Truth, in which 'there is no change nor shadow of alteration.'[28] Still they set these glowing phantasms[29] on these dishes before me. It were better to have loved this sun which is at least true to these eyes than those falsehoods which deceive the mind through the eyes. Yet, because I thought them to be Thee, I ate—not eagerly, indeed, for Thou didst not savor in my mouth as Thou art (indeed Thou wert not these empty fictions), nor was I nourished by them but, rather, exhausted.

Food in dreams is very much like food when one is awake, but sleepers are not nourished by it, for they are asleep. But, those viands were not in any way like Thee, as Thou hast spoken to me now, for they were bodily phantasms, false bodies. Those true bodies, which we see with bodily vision either in the sky or on earth, are more certain than they. We see these things as the beasts and birds do, and they are more certain than when we imagine them. Again, we picture these in imagination more certainly than when we form from them conceptions of other things, greater and unlimited, which are completely non-existent. On such empty things was I then nourished, and I was not nourished.

---

27 For a survey of Manichaean cosmology and astrology, cf. Alfaric, *op. cit.* 1.33-37.

28 James 1.17.

29 *phantasmata*: translated as 'phantasms' (meaning composite imaginative constructs, made within the soul and not corresponding exactly to things as perceived) and to be distinguished from *phantasiae*, translated as 'images' (meaning impressions of things as they have been perceived). On the terminology, see *De musica* 6.11.32, and the Stoic terms, *phántasma* and *phantasía*, as reported by Diogenes Laertius, *Zeno* 36.50.

But Thou, O my Love, for whom I faint[30] so that I may be strong, art neither those bodies which we see even though they are in the heavens nor those things which we do not see there, for Thou hast established them in creation, yet hast not included them among the highest products of Thy creation.[31] How distant art Thou, then, from these phantasms of mine, the phantasms of bodies, which do not exist at all! The images of bodies which exist are more certain than these, and more certain than these images are the bodies which Thou art not. But, neither art Thou the soul, which is the life of bodies (hence, the life of bodies is better and more certain than the bodies), but Thou art the Life of souls, the Life of lives; living Thyself, Thou dost not change, the Life of my soul.[32]

(11) Where wert Thou, then, in relation to me at that time, and how far away? Of course, I was wandering far from Thee, cut off even from the husks of the swine whom I was feeding on husks.[33] How much better are the fables of the grammarians and poets than these deceptions! A verse, a poem, and a flying Medea[34] are certainly more useful than the five elements[35] diversely painted to correspond to the five caves of darkness, which do not exist at all and yet are deadly to the believer. I may change a verse or a poem even

30 Cf. 2 Cor. 12.10.

31 That is, spiritual substances (angels and human souls) are the highest products of the Creator.

32 Cf. Plotinus, *Ennead.* 5.3.14.

33 Cf. Luke 15.16.

34 Cf. *Epist.* 7.4, where Augustine again uses the image of a 'flying Medea,' for whom cf. Ovid, *Metam.* 7.219ff. and the end of Seneca's *Medea.*

35 The 'First Man' uses five good elements (pure air, living fire, fresh wind, clear water, and light) in fighting against the demon who is the champion of evil, and who uses five opposed elements (smoke, devouring fire, destructive wind, poisoned water, and darkness). Besides the works of Augustine (*Contra epist. Man.* 19.28 and *De haeres.* 46), these details are known through the reports of Theodore bar-Khôni and An Nadim. Cf. Alfaric, *op. cit.* 1.34.

into real food; and, though I did sing of a flying Medea, I did not say it was true, and, though I listened to such singing, I did not give credence to it—but I did believe those other things, unfortunately! By what steps was I led down to 'the depths of hell,'[36] toiling and seething in want of truth, when it was Thee, O My God (for I am confessing to Thee, who hast been compassionate to me when I had not yet confessed), it was Thee I sought, not according to the understanding of the mind, by which Thou didst will us to stand above brutes, but according to fleshly sensation. But, Thou wert deeper within me than my innermost depths and higher than my highest parts. I happened upon that bold woman, lacking in prudence, the obscure allegory of Solomon, sitting upon a seat outside her house and saying: 'Eat ye the bread of secrecies willingly, and drink ye stolen waters which are sweet.'[37] And she seduced me, because she found me dwelling externally in the eye of my flesh, chewing over, within myself, such things as I had taken in through it.

Chapter 7

(12) For, I did not know that other reality which truly is. I was moved as by a false sharpness of wit to look favorably upon these stupid deceivers, when they asked me what was the source of evil, and whether God was limited by a bodily shape and had hair and finger nails, and whether those men who had many wives at the same time, or killed men, or made sacrifices of animals were to be accounted just. In my ignorance, I was disturbed by such things and, while I was getting farther away from the truth, I was under the im-

36 Prov. 9.18.

37 Cf. Prov. 9.17: 'Stolen waters are sweeter, and hidden bread is more pleasant,' according to the Vulgate text; for the foolish woman, cf. *ibid.* 13.

pression that I was getting closer to it. I did not know that evil is but the privation of the good,[38] even to the extent that evil does not exist at all. How could I have seen this, for my vision was limited with my eyes, to material bodies; with my mind, to phantasms?

I did not know that God is a Spirit, whose members are not extended in length and breadth, whose Being is not a mass; for a mass is less in its part than in its whole, and, if it be infinite, it is less in some part which is marked off by a definite space than in its infinity, and it is not wholly in every place as is a spirit, as is God. Moreover, I was utterly ignorant of that which is within us by which we exist, and why, in the Scripture,[39] we are said to be in the image of God.

(13) Nor did I know the true, inner justice which does not base its judgments on custom, but on the supremely right law of the omnipotent God, by which moral patterns of various places and times are determined according to those places and, since it is the same everywhere and always, not differing in different places and at different times. By its standards Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Moses and David, and all who are praised by the mouth of God, were just. But they were adjudged evil by the inexperienced who judge 'by man's tribunal,'[40] measuring all the behavior of mankind by their own moral standard. Just as if one who is ignorant of armor, and which piece fits which part of the body, should try to wear leg armor on his head and to protect his feet with helmets, and then complain that it is a bad fit.

38 Augustine's explanation of evil as a privation of good has an important influence on later Christian philosophy. See, for instance: Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus* 4 (in the translation by C. E. Rolt, *Dionysius the Areopagite* [London 1940] 111-130); and St. Thomas, *Summa theologica* I, q. 48, a. 1, c. Cf. Plotinus, *Ennead.* 3.2.5: 'In general, it must be stated that evil is the privation of the good.'

39 Gen. 1.27.

40 1 Cor. 4.3.

Or, as if a person became angry that he was not allowed to set out his wares for sale on the afternoon of a public half-holiday, because such business was permitted in the morning; or, as if he saw in one and the same house something being handled by a slave which is not customarily touched by the butler, or something being done behind the stable which is prohibited in the dining room, and became indignant on the pretext that it is one home and one family and that equal rights are not granted to all people in every place!

These are the kind of people who become indignant when they hear that something was permitted to just men in times past which is not permitted to just men now, and at the fact that God commanded certain people to do one thing, and other people, for a temporal reason, to do something else, both observing the same justice. For, in one man, and on one day, and in one house, they may see that one thing is suitable to one member, another to another, and that something which was permissible up to now becomes illicit an hour hence, that something permitted or prescribed in one spot is prohibited and punished in a nearby place. But, is justice variable and mutable? Rather, the times over which it rules do not follow the same courses, for they are temporal. Men, whose life on earth is short, their sense not being able to fit together the reason of former times and other peoples which they know not with those which they have experienced, may easily see in one body, or day, or house, what is fitting to a certain member, or at a certain time and for what parts and persons. In one instance they feel offense, in this other they are compliant.

(14) I did not know these things, then, and I paid them no attention. They came to my eyes from all sides, but I did not see. I read poetry aloud and was not permitted to place just any foot wherever I liked, but differently in one or the other meter, and not the same foot in all places in one verse.

Yet that art by which I read poetry was not different in different places, but the same for all. Yet, I did not perceive that justice, which good and saintly men observed, possessed in one whole, far more excellently and sublimely, all those things which it prescribed, and that it was in no way changed; yet for different times it distributed and prescribed, not all things at once, but what was proper. I blindly censured the holy patriarchs, not only for using present things as God commanded and inspired, but also for foretelling things to come, as God revealed them.

Chapter 8

(15) Now, is there any time or any place in which it is unjust to love God 'with one's whole heart, with one's whole soul, and with one's whole mind, and to love one's neighbor as oneself'?[41] Thus, offenses[42] against nature must everywhere and always be abominated and punished, as were those of the Sodomites. Even if all peoples were to do these things, they would be held in the same condition of guilt under the divine Law, which did not so fashion men that they should abuse themselves in this way. That very society which should exist between God and ourselves is in fact violated when the same nature of which He is the Author is polluted by the perversity of an evil appetite.

And those things which are offenses against the customs of

41 Matt. 22.37-39.

42 Augustine distinguishes in this and the following two paragraphs between *flagitia* (sins against oneself) and *facinora* (sins against others). Cf. *De doct. Christ.* 3.10.16: *Quod agit indomita cupiditas ad corrumpendum animum et corpus suum, flagitium vocatur; quod autem agit ut alteri nocet, facinus dicitur. Et haec sunt duo genera omnium peccatorum; sed flagitia priora sunt.* J. J. Gavigan, in his translation of *Christian Instruction* in this series (New York 1947) reads *flagitium* as vice, *facinus* as crime.

men are to be avoided, in accord with the variation of such customs; so that an agreement between states which is established by popular acceptance, or by law, may not be wantonly violated by any citizen or foreign traveler. For, every part which is not in agreement with its whole is foul. But, when God commands something opposed to a custom or compact of any people, though it has never been done there, it is to be done; if it is neglected, it is to be reinstated; and, if it has not been established, it is to be established. For, if the ruler of a state is permitted to command something, in the state which he rules, which had never been commanded before by another or by himself, and if this may be obeyed without opposition to the social principle of the state, nay more, if disobedience to it be an offense against those principles (for obedience to rulers is a universal agreement in human society)—how much more are we to obey unhesitatingly the God who is the Ruler of all His creatures, in those things which He commands! Just as among the powers of human society the greater power is placed above the less in the matter of obedience, so is God placed above all.

(16) So, too, is it in the case of crimes[43] against others, where there is an evil inclination to harm, either by insolent treatment or by actual injury; and in either case, whether for the sake of vengeance, as is the case with private enemies, or for the sake of securing some external advantage, as in the case of a bandit attacking a traveler, or for the sake of avoiding evil, as in the case of a man who is feared, or through envy, as felt by an unhappy man toward one who is more fortunate or by one who has prospered in some particular when he fears that another is becoming his equal or feels pain that he is already such, or because of mere enjoyment in another's suffering, as in the case of those who

43 *in facinoribus*: see previous note. These crimes like *flagitia* (cf. sect. 15, near beginning) are always to be abominated and punished.

watch gladiators or those who deride and make fun of others.

These are the capital forms of iniquity, which sprout in rank abundance from the lust for domination, for observation, or for sensation[44]—either from one or two of these, or from all together. Thus does one live evilly in opposition to the three and seven, the 'psaltery of ten strings,'[45] Thy Decalogue,[46] O highest and most sweet God. But, what turpitude can touch Thee, who art incorruptible? Or what transgression can attack Thee, to whom no injury can be done? But, this is the object of Thy vengeance, the evil which men do against themselves, for, even when they sin against Thee, they do a work of impiety against their own souls, and iniquity lies to itself[47] either by corrupting and perverting that nature which Thou hast made and ordered, either through immoderate use of things which are permitted or through a passionate desire for unpermitted things, for 'that use which is against nature'[48]—or they are found guilty in mind and speech who turn their anger against Thee and 'kick against the goad'[49]—or, when they have broken the confines of human society, they boldly rejoice in private associations and separate factions corresponding to their sympathies or animosities. These things happen when Thou art abandoned,[50] O Fountain of life, who art the one, true Creator and Ruler of the universe, and when, from self-regarding pride, a false unity is loved in the part.

Thus, the return to Thee is by way of humble devotion,

---

44 1 John 2.16: 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.' In *Enarr. in ps.* 8.13, Augustine adheres to the Biblical list: 'lust of the flesh, pride, and curiosity.'

45 Ps. 143.9.

46 Cf. *Serm.* 9, *De X chordis* 5.6: 'Now the Decalogue has ten precepts of the law, which are so arranged that three pertain to God, seven pertain to men.'

47 Ps. 26.12.

48 Rom. 1.26.

49 Acts 9.5.

50 Cf. Jer. 2.13.

and Thou dost cleanse us from evil habit. Thou art merciful to the sins of those who confess and Thou dost hear the groaning of those who are in fetters, loosing the chains which we have fashioned for ourselves, provided we do not lift the horns[51] of false liberty against Thee in our craving to possess more but losing everything, and by loving our own more than Thee, the Good of all.

Chapter 9

(17) But amidst evil acts against ourselves and against others and so many iniquities, there are the sins of those who are making progress. By people of good judgment, these acts are both blamed from the side of the rule of perfection and praised because of the hope of fruit to come, as is the growing stalk because of the harvest. There also are actions somewhat like offenses against ourselves or against others, yet they are not sins, for they neither offend Thee, our Lord God, nor the fellowship of society. For instance, in the procurement of things for the needs of life, under fitting external circumstances, it is uncertain whether there may be a lust for possession; or, in the case of punishment by properly constituted authority for the sake of correction, it is uncertain whether there be an inner desire to cause injury.

And so, many actions which appear worthy of men's disapproval are approved by Thy testimony, and many praised by men are condemned before Thee, for there is often a difference between the species of the deed, and the mind of the agent, and the critical situation of hidden circumstance.[52]

---

51 Ps. 74.5-6.

52 Augustine seems to enumerate the three moral "determinants" of voluntary action, here: (a) the *species facti;* (b) the *facientis animus,* i.e., intention of the agent; and (c) the *articulus occulti tem-*

But, when Thou suddenly commandest something which is unusual and unforeseen,[53] even a thing which Thou hast formerly forbidden, and although Thou hidest for the time the reason for Thy command, who will doubt that is should be done, even though it be opposed to the social conventions of some men? For, only that society of men is just which serves Thee. But blessed are they who know that Thou hast commanded. For, all things done by those who serve Thee are either to carry out the demands of the present or to foreshadow the future.

Chapter 10

(18) While I was ignorant of this, I ridiculed those who are Thy saintly servants and prophets. And what was I doing while ridiculing them but becoming more ridiculous in Thy sight, gradually and little by little being drawn into such foolishness that I believed that a fig weeps when it is plucked, and that the tree, its mother, sheds milky tears? But, if some 'saint'[54] ate this fig, plucked by another man and

---

poris, i.e., the circumstances of time which are not evident. For the doctrine of these determinants, cf. St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* I-II, q. 18, a. 1-7.

53 Augustine is thinking of some incident such as God's commanding Abraham to slay his son, Isaac (Gen. 22.1-12).

54 There were two levels of membership in the Manichaean religion: (a) the *auditors* were required to believe in a simplified set of basic teachings of Mani, to say some prayers, and to observe some dietary regulations (Augustine, *De mor. Manich.,* is an important source of information, but many details are now confirmed from the manuscript of the *Khouastouanift,* which has been edited as: 'Dr. Stein's Khuastuanift from Tun huang, Being a Confession Prayer of the Manichaean Auditores,' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* [1911] 277-314); and (b) the *elect,* or 'saints,' who were supposed to follow a strict ascetic rule, retiring from wordly affairs to live a life of religious perfection (Augustine tells of an abortive attempt to maintain such a community of the *elect* in Rome, about the year 382, *De mor.*

not by his own impious action, he would blend it in his bowels and breathe forth angels from it, even little pieces of God, as he groaned in prayer and belched. These particles of the highest and true God were imprisoned in this fruit unless released by the teeth and stomach of some saintly members of the 'elect.' Unfortunately, I believed that mercy should be shown to the fruits of the earth rather than to the men for whom they were produced. For, if a hungry man, not a Manichaean, were to ask for food and if it were given him, I would have thought that mouthful destined to receive capital punishment.

Chapter 11

(19) And Thou didst 'put forth Thy Hand from on high'[55] and draw forth my soul[56] from this deep darkness of mind, while my mother, one of Thy faithful, wept for me before Thee, far more than do mothers who weep at bodily deaths. She saw my death in the spirit of faith and the spirit which she had received from Thee, and Thou didst hear her, O Lord. Thou didst hear her and didst not despise her tears, as they flowed forth and watered the ground beneath her eyes in every place of her prayer; Thou didst hear her.

For, whence came the dream by which Thou didst console her, so that she agreed again to live with me and to eat with me in our home? This she had begun to refuse, because she turned away from and abhorred the blasphemies of my

---

Manich. 19; cf., also, Alfaric, *op. cit.* 2.54-58). One of the duties of the auditors was to bring food, such as figs and melons, to be consumed by the elect in accordance with the belief that such consumption released the particles of 'Light' from the evil matter in these foods. Augustine was an auditor, but never one of the elect; cf. below, 5.10.18.

55 Ps. 143.7.

56 Cf. Ps. 85.13.

error. She saw herself standing on a wooden rule,[57] and approaching her was a young man, resplendent, joyful, and smiling at her, while she was grieving and overcome with her grief. And, when he asked her the reasons for her grief and daily tears (not to learn, but, as is customary, to instruct) she replied that she was bewailing my perdition. He commanded that she be untroubled, and he advised her to give attention and see, that wherever she was there also was I. And when she looked, she saw me standing near her on that same rule.

Whence this dream, unless Thy ears were [inclined] to her heart,[58] O Thou omnipotent Good, who takest such care of each of us as if he were Thine only care, and of all as of each one?

(20) Whence, again, came this. When she told me of her vision and I attempted to reduce its meaning to this—that she should not give up hope of becoming what I was—immediately and without any hesitation, she answered: 'No, what was said to me was not: "Where he is, you are," but, "Where you are, he is." '

I confess to Thee, O Lord, my remembrance, as far as I can recall it (and I have often spoken of it), that I was more disturbed by Thy response from my watchful mother, and the fact that she was unmoved by the specious falsity of my interpretation, and that she quickly saw what had to be seen (I, of course, had not seen it before she said it), than by the dream itself, in which the joy which came to that holy woman so much later was then so much earlier prefigured for the consolation of her then present distress.

Almost nine years went by, during which I wallowed in

---

57 *in quadam regula lignea*: the 'rule' is probably a measuring-stick, but (below, 8.12.30) Augustine calls it 'that rule of faith [*regula fidei*], in that revelation which Thou hadst given her [Monica] so many years before.'

58 Cf. Ps. 10.17.

the deep mire[59] and darkness of error, while I frequently tried to rise above it, only to sink down more heavily. Yet, that chaste, holy, and sober widow, (such as Thou dost love), already more cheerful in her hopes, but no more sparing in her tears and lamentations, ceased not to weep for me before Thee in all the hours of her prayers. And her prayers entered into Thy sight,[60] but Thou didst permit me still to roll about and flounder in that dark fog.

Chapter 12

(21) Thou didst give me, in the meantime, another answer which I remember. For, I pass over many things because I am hurrying on to those things which more urgently demand that I confess to Thee, and many things I do not remember.

Yes, Thou didst give another answer through Thy priest, a certain bishop who was educated in the Church and well trained in Thy books. When that woman [Monica] begged him to be good enough to talk with me and refute my errors, to teach me to unlearn evil things and to learn good things (he would do this whenever he happened to find any suitable listeners), he refused, prudently of course, as I later realized. He replied that I was not yet teachable, due to the fact that I was puffed up with pride at the novelty of that heresy and that I had disturbed many unlearned people with all sorts of trifling questions, as she had pointed out to him. 'But,' he said, 'let him stay where he is. Just pray to the Lord for him. He will find out himself, by reading, what the error is and how great an impiety.' At the same time, he also told her how he, as a little boy, was given over to the

59 Cf. Ps. 68.3.
60 Cf. Ps. 87.3.

Manichaeans by his mother, who had been led astray, and that he had not only read nearly all their writings, but had even copied them often, and, without anyone arguing in opposition or convincing him, it became clear to him how much this sect was to be avoided. And so, he had left it. When he said this and she refused to be satisfied, but began to beg him all the more, and with copious tears, that he would see me and have a discussion with me, he then became vexed and said impatiently: 'Leave me now; as I hope for your salvation, it is impossible for the son of these tears to perish.'

And she often recalled in her conversations with me that she took this as a message from heaven.

BOOK FOUR

Chapter 1

DURING THIS SAME PERIOD of nine years, from my nineteenth to my twenty-eighth year, we were led astray and we led [others] astray, deceived and deceiving,[1] through a variety of passions; openly, through teachings which they call liberal; secretly,[2] through the false name of religion. In the former, we were proud; in the latter, superstitious; in all, vain. On the one hand, we were pursuers of the emptiness of popular glory, even of applause in the theatres, poetry contests, the competition for garlands of grass, the follies of stage shows, and the immoderation of lusts. On the other, desirous of cleansing ourselves from these sordid things, we brought food for those who were called the 'elect' and the 'saints,' so that they might fashion from it, in the workshop[3] of their paunches, angels and gods for us, through whom we might be made free. I was one of these pursuers

1 Cf. 2 Tim. 3.13. The period Augustine refers to here is A.D. 374-383.
2 The Manichaeans were forced to conceal somewhat their religious activities because of restrictive Imperial laws. Cf. *Cod. Theod.* 16.5.3.
3 *officina aqualiculi;* cf. *Contra Faust.* 6.4.

and I did these things along with my friends, who were deceived by me and along with me.

Let those who are proud mock me, those who have not yet for their own good been laid prostrate and broken by Thee, O my God; still will I confess my shame to Thee, in Thy praise.[4] Bear with me, I beg, and permit me to follow round in present memory the past courses of my error and to offer Thee a sacrifice of rejoicing.[5] For, what am I for myself, without Thee, but a guide unto destruction? Or what am I, when all is well with me, but one suckling on Thy milk and enjoying Thee, the food incorruptible?[6] And what is man, any man, since he is but a man? Let those who are strong and powerful mock us; we who are weak and needy,[7] let us confess unto Thee.

Chapter 2

(2) I was teaching the rhetorical art during those years and, while conquered by cupidity, I was a vender of victorious verbosity. Of course, I preferred, Thou knowest, O Lord, to have good pupils, as 'good' is so used, and I taught them tricks [of speech] without trickery; not that they might employ them to condemn an innocent man, but sometimes to save the head of a guilty one. And Thou, O God, didst see from afar my faith sliding down the slippery course, gleaming in the midst of much smoke,[8] for, though I was their companion, I showed some faith in that work of teaching those who loved vanity and sought after lying.[9]

4 Cf. Ps. 105.47.
5 Cf. Ps. 49.14.
6 Cf. John 6.27.
7 Ps. 73.21.
8 Cf. Matt. 12.20 (Isa. 42.3).
9 Cf. Ps. 4.3.

In those years, I lived with a woman,[10] not in a union which is called lawful, but one which restless and imprudent passion had sought out. Yet, there was but one woman and I was not unfaithful to her. But, I found in my own case what a difference there is between the moderated pleasure of conjugal union, which was mutually entered into for the generation of offspring, and a union of wanton love, in which a child is born but not wanted, though when born it compels one to love it.

(3) I remember, too, when I wanted to enter a poetry contest in the theatre, some fellow who told fortunes by inspecting animals' entrails asked me what fee I would give him so that I might win, and I, disliking and loathing those filthy practices, answered that even if the crown were of everlasting gold I would not have even a fly killed[11] to ensure victory. He was to kill animals in his sacrifices and by these displays of honor, it seemed, he was to encourage the demons to favor me. But, I did not spurn this evil through any modest reserve of Thy prompting, O God of my heart.[12] For, I did not know how to love Thee, of whom I only knew how to think in terms of corporeal splendors. Does not the soul which sighs for such fictions commit fornication[13] against Thee, and, placing its trust in errors, 'feed the winds'?[14] Evidently, I was unwilling to have a sacrifice offered for me to the demons, yet I was sacrificing myself to them in that superstition of mine. For, what is it to feed the winds but to feed those demons, that is, by our errors, to become for them objects of sport and of derision?

---

10 This woman, whose name is never revealed, stayed with Augustine until shortly before his conversion in Milan; cf. below, 6.15.25.

11 The Manichaeans professed a horror of all killing, even of plants; cf. *De mor. Manich.* 12.54: 'to cut down a tree, you say, is a homicide, as is also the killing of animals.'

12 Ps. 72.26.

13 Cf. Ps. 72.27.

14 Osee 12.1.

Chapter 3

(4) And so, I did not give up consulting quite openly those fakers whom they call numerologists,[15] because I saw that they used no sacrifice and did not direct imprecations to any spirit for the sake of divination. However, true Christian piety must logically reject and condemn their practices.

It is good to confess to Thee, O Lord, [16] and to say: 'Have mercy on me, heal my soul for I have sinned against Thee';[17] not to abuse Thy indulgence for a license to sin, but to recall the voice of our Lord: 'Behold, Thou art cured; sin no more, lest something worse befall thee.'[18]

These men try to kill all this wholesomeness, when they say: 'The inevitable cause of your sinning is from the heavens,' and 'Venus has done this, or Saturn, or Mars'; all this in order that man, flesh and blood and proud corruption, may be guiltless, while the creator and orderer of the heavens and of the stars is found guilty. Who is He but our God, the Sweetness and the Source of justice, Thou who dost to each man according to his works[19] and dost not spurn the contrite and humbled heart?[20]

(5) At that time, there was a sage man[21] who was very learned in the art of medicine and most outstanding in that field. He, as the proconsul, not as a physician, with his own hand had placed the contest crown on my sick head. For, Thou art the Healer of that kind of sickness—Thou who dost

15 *mathematicos*: astrologers were very influential in the late Roman Empire; cf. Augustine's remarks in *De div. quaest.* LXXXIII 14.1.2.
16 Ps. 91.2.
17 Ps. 40.5.
18 John 5.14.
19 Matt. 16.27; Rom. 2.6.
20 Ps. 50.19.
21 Vindicianus is mentioned by name (below, 7.6.8). Cf. *Epist.* 138.3, where he is called 'that great physician of our times.'

resist the proud[22] and givest grace to the humble. Yet, even through that old man, didst Thou fail me or forsake the healing of my soul?

For, I became more familiar with him and came to pay careful and steady attention to his conversation, which was delightful and earnest because of the vigor of his views and lacking in all verbal affectation. He learned, from such conversation with me, that I was infatuated with the books of the astrologers.[23] In a kind and fatherly way, he warned me to throw them away and not to spend vainly the attention and effort, which were needed for useful things, on such foolishness. He said that he had studied it, so that he even desired in his early years to adopt it as the profession by which he would earn his livelihood. Since he had understood Hippocrates,[24] he was well able to understand those books. However, he afterwards turned to medicine, abandoning these studies for no other reason that the fact that he had found them utterly false and, as a serious man, was unwilling to make his living by deceiving men.

'But you,' he said, 'have rhetoric as a means of supporting yourself among men. Yet you are pursuing this deceptive art because of your free interest and not as a necessary means of livelihood. So, you should believe me all the more in this matter of astrology, for I worked hard to learn it perfectly, since it once was my desire to make my living by it only.'

When I asked him how it was that many true things were foretold by means of it, he answered, as well he could, that this was due to the force of chance, which was so widespread in nature. For, if one consulted by chance a page from some poet,[25] whose song and thought were of something quite dif-

22 Prov. 3.34; James 4.6; 1 Peter 5.5.

23 *genethliacorum*: from the Greek, *genethliakós,* pertaining to birth. See *De doct. Christ.* 2.21.32 (trans. by Gavigan, as *Christian Instruction,* in this series).

24 The father of Greek medicine, fifth century B.C.

25 Vergil was usually the poet so consulted; hence, the name *sortes Vergilianae.*

ferent, and a verse would often come forth which would appear wonderfully pertinent to the business in hand, there was no need of wonder, he would say, if, out of the human soul prompted by some higher being and ignorant of what is going on within itself, some message were announced, not by art but by chance, which would fit in with the business and actions of a questioner.[26]

(6) This, then, Thou didst do to look after me either by means of this man, or through him, and Thou didst outline in my memory what I might later seek by myself. But at that time, neither he nor my dear friend, Nebridius,[27] an exceedingly good and temperate young man who ridiculed the whole business of divination, could persuade me to cast it aside, since the authority of those writers carried more weight with me. I had found, up to that point, no proof which gave a certain answer to my questioning, nothing in which it became unambiguously clear to me that the truths told by those so consulted were told by chance or by luck and not by the art of the star-gazers.

Chapter 4

(7) During those years, when I first began to teach in the town of my birth,[28] I had made, due to common interests, a close friend of a young man my own age, like myself, budding into the bloom of manhood. He had grown up with me as a boy; we had gone to school together and played together. But, he was not such a close friend in the beginning, and even at that time it was not like true friendship, for this is not true unless Thou dost cement it between those who cleave

26 Augustine gives an apparent example of mind-reading by the magician, Albicerius, in *Contra acad.* 1.6.18; but cf. below, 7.6.10.

27 See Augustine's correspondence with this philosophical-minded young man, *Epist.* 3-14.

28 Augustine taught in Tagaste from 375 to 376.

to Thee with the charity which is diffused into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.[29] Yet, it was exceedingly sweet, being heated by the fervor of similar interests. I had turned him away from the true faith, which he held not from his family, but just from his adolescence, to the superstitious and pernicious fables, because of which my mother wept for me. That man went astray in his mind, along with me, and my soul could do nothing without him. And, behold, Thou wert close upon the backs of Thy fugitives, O God of vengenace[30] and, at the same time, Fount of mercies, who dost turn us to Thee in wondrous ways. Behold, Thou didst take the man from this life, when he had scarcely completed a year of friendship with me, sweeter to me than all the sweetnesses of this life.

(8) What one man can enumerate Thy praises,[31] for the things he has experienced within his solitary self? What didst Thou do at that time, my God, and how impenetrable is the depth of Thy judgments?[32] For, when he was struggling with his fever, for a long time he lay senseless in the sweat of death, and, when hope was abandoned, he was baptized while unconscious. It was no concern of mine, for I presumed that his soul would retain what it had received from me rather than what was done to the body of the unconscious man. But, it was quite otherwise. He rallied and became well. Immediately, as soon as I was able to speak to him (and I could as soon as he was able, for I did not leave him, since we were too dependent on each other), I tried to make a joke with him, as if he, too, would laugh along with me at the baptism[33] which he had received when completely out of

29 Rom. 5.5.
30 Ps. 93.1.
31 Cf. Ps. 105.2.
32 Cf. Ps. 35.7; Rom. 11.33.
33 As a devotee of Manichaeanism, Augustine would not approve of baptism, at this time. Cf. *De haeres.* 46; *Contra duas epist. Pelag.* 2.2; 4.4.

his mind and senses. However, he had already learned that he had received it. And he was as much in horror of me as of an enemy, and he warned me, with amazing and sudden independence of mind, that I had to stop saying such things to him if I desired to remain his friend. Dumbfounded and disturbed, I repressed all my feelings so that he might first grow well and be in such condition of health that I could deal with him as I wished. But, he was torn away from my folly, to be kept with Thee for my consolation. After a few days, during my absence, the fevers returned and he died.

(9) With this sorrow my heart was clouded over,[34] and whatever I looked upon was death. The place of my birth was a torment to me and my father's house a strange unhappiness. Whatever I had shared with him was, without him, transformed into a horrible torture. My eyes looked everywhere for him, without satisfaction. I hated all places for not possessing him, nor could they now tell me: 'See, he is coming,' as when he was alive but absent. I became a great problem to myself, continually asking my soul why it was sad and why it disturbed me so much,[35] and it knew no answer to give me. If I said, 'Hope in God,' it rightly refused obedience, for this man, who had been lost as a dear friend, was truer and better than the image to which hope was directed. Tears alone were sweet to me. They took the place of my friend 'in the delights of my mind.'[36]

Chapter 5

(10) And now, O Lord, these things have passed away

34 Cf. Lam. 5.17.
35 Ps. 41.6,12; 42.5.
36 Cf. Ps. 138.11; Prov. 29.17.

and my wound has been relieved by time. May I hear from Thee, who art Truth, moving the ear of my heart near to Thy mouth, so that Thou mayest tell me why tears are sweet to those in misfortune? Hast thou, though present everywhere, put our misfortunes far from Thee? Dost Thou dwell within Thyself, while we are tossed hither and yon amongst our trials? Yet, unless we could lift our cries to Thine ears, there would remain no hope for us. How comes it, then, that we gather sweet fruit from this life's bitterness, moaning, weeping, sighing, and complaining? Is the sweetness this, that we hope to be heard by Thee? That is certainly true in the case of prayers, for they possess a longing to reach their goal. But, is it true of sorrow over a lost thing and of the lamentation by which I was then overwhelmed? For, I was not in hopes of bringing him back to life, nor did I pray for this in my tears, but I simply sorrowed and wept. Bereft of happiness was I, and bereft of my joy. Or is it that weeping, too, is a bitter thing, and, because of a dislike of the things which we formerly enjoyed, we then come to delight in it while we recoil from them in disgust?

Chapter 6

(11) But, why do I speak of these things? Now is not the time for questioning, but for confessing to Thee. I was wretched, and wretched is every mind which is bound by the friendship of mortal things. It is torn apart when it loses them and then it feels its wretchedness, by which it is wretched even before losing them. Thus was I at that time, and I wept most bitterly, finding my rest in bitterness. So wretched was I that I held that wretched life dearer than my friend. For, though I would gladly have changed it, I was still no less unwilling to lose it than him,[37] and I do not know whether

37 Cf. *De. lib. arb.* 3.7.20-8.23.

I would have been willing to give it up, even for him, as is told of Orestes and Pylades[38] (if it is not merely a bit of fiction), who both desired to die for each other, for not to be alive together was worse than death to them. But, some incomprehensible feeling, quite contrary to theirs, arose in me; both a loathing of living and a fear of dying weighed heavily within me. I believe that the more I loved him, the more I hated and feared death as a very cruel enemy which had taken him from me, and I felt that it might suddenly destroy all men, as it had him. I was exactly like that, I remember.

Look at my heart, O my God, look within. See, I do remember, O my Hope, who dost cleanse me of the stains of such feeling, directing my eyes to Thee and plucking my feet from the snare.[39] I marveled that other mortals were still alive, when he, whom I had loved as if he would never die, was dead. And I marveled all the more that I, who was his other self, should still live when he was dead. A certain man[40] was right when he spoke of his friend as 'his soul's other half.' For, I felt that my soul and his soul were but one soul in two bodies;[41] life was appalling to me, since I preferred not to live as a half-being. Yet, perhaps I feared to die, lest he whom I had loved much should die completely.[42]

Chapter 7

(12) Oh, the insanity of not knowing how to love men

38 Two inseparable friends in Greek mythology; cf. Ovid, *Tristia* 4.4.74.
39 Ps. 24.15.
40 Horace, speaking of Vergil, in *Carmina* 1.3.8: *Et serves animae dimidium meae.* Augustine quotes only the last three words.
41 Ovid, *Tristia* 4.4.72: *qui duo corporibus mentibus unus erant.*
42 Of this passage Augustine remarks in *Retract.* 2.6.2: 'a trifling declamation rather than a serious confession.'

as men should be loved! O foolish man, not suffering the lot of man with moderation! Yet, thus was I at that time. And so, I raved, wept, and grew confused; there was neither rest nor deliberation. I carried about my cut and bleeding soul, which was unwilling to be borne by me, and I could find no place to put it. It found contentment neither in the attractions of the woods, nor in games and songs, nor in the sweetness of fragrant places, nor in sumptuous dining, nor in the pleasures of bedchamber and couch, nor, finally, even in books and poems. All things became hideous, even light itself. Whatever was not what he was became unbearable and loathsome, except groaning and tears. In these alone was there a little rest. Indeed, whenever my soul was drawn away from these, a great burden of unhappiness would bear down upon me.

I knew that it had to be lifted up to Thee,[43] O Lord, and to be made well, but this I neither would nor could do, especially because Thou wert, in my thoughts, nothing substantial or stable. For Thou wert not Thyself but an empty figment of the imagination. My error was my God. If I attempted to rest my soul on this, so that it might find repose, it would slip through the emptiness and again fall back on me. For myself, I continued to be an unhappy place, where I could not stay and which I could not leave. For, to what place could my heart flee from my heart? Where could I get away from myself?[44] Where elude my own pursuit?

Still, I did get away from my home town. My eyes would seek him less in a place where they were not accustomed to see him. So, from the town of Tagaste, I came to Carthage.[45]

---

43 Cf. Ps. 24.1.
44 Cf. Horace, *Carmina* 2.16.19: *Patriae quis exsul /Se quoque fugit?*
45 A.D. 376; cf. *Contra acad.* 2.2.3.

Chapter 8

(13) Time takes no holiday. It is never idle as it glides through our sense perceptions.[46] It works wonders in one's mind. See how it came and went from day to day, and in coming and going it subtly introduced into me other hopes and other memories. Gradually, it restored me to the kinds of pleasures which I formerly enjoyed, and my sorrow gave way to these. Nevertheless, they were not followed by other sorrows, but by the causes of other sorrows. For, why had that sorrow pierced me so easily and so deeply, unless because I had poured forth my soul upon the sand, in loving a mortal being as if he would not die?

What brought me the greatest strength and refreshment were the consolations of other friends, those in whose company I loved a substitute in place of loving Thee, and this was a giant fable[47] and an endless lie. By its impure scratching, our mind with its 'itching ears'[48] was corrupted. But, this fable did not die for me, even if one of my friends did. There were other things among them which more completely captured my mind: conversations and jokes together, mutual rendering of good services, the reading together of sweetly phrased books, the sharing of nonsense and mutual attentions, occasional disagreements without strong feeling such as a man might have with himself, and, though very rarely, actual dissension as a seasoning of our many points of agreement, teaching each other and learning from each other, impatient longing for those who were away, and joyous reception on their return—these and similar indications proceeding from the heart of lovers and mutual friends, through

46 Augustine had a very realistic concept of time, considering it almost as a flowing substance. For a development of much the same realistic position, see St. Anselm of Canterbury, *De veritate, c.* 13, *ad fin.*

47 *ingens fabula*: Manichaeanism dealt in fables, particularly concerning the origin of the universe and of man.

48 2 Tim. 4.3.

the mouth, the tongue, the eyes, and a thousand ingratiating movements, fusing our minds together as if by kindling-wood and making one out of many.

Chapter 9

(14) This is what is loved among friends, and it is so loved that the human conscience feels guilty before itself, if it does not love one who returns the love and if it does not give love for love, seeking nothing in a bodily way beyond the signs of good will. From this comes that lamentation, if someone dies, the darknesses of sorrow and the heart steeped in tears, by sweetness turned to bitterness, and the death of the living arising from the lost life of the dead.

Happy is he who loves Thee,[49] and his friend in Thee, and his enemy because of Thee.[50] He alone loses no dear one, since to him all men are dear in Him who is never lost. And who is this but our God, the God who is the Maker of heaven and earth[51] and who fills them up[52] because He makes them by filling them? No one loses Thee, unless he leaves Thee. And, because he leaves Thee, whither can he go or flee except from Thy pleasure into Thy ire? For, where does he not find Thy law in his punishment? And 'Thy Law is the Truth' and 'Thou art the Truth.'[53]

Chapter 10

(15) God of virtues, turn us to Thee, show us Thy face

49 Cf. Tob. 13.18.
50 Cf. Matt. 5.44.
51 Gen. 1.1.
52 Cf. Jer. 23.24.
53 Ps. 118.142; John 14.6.

and we shall be saved.[54] For, in whatever direction the soul of man turns, it is fixed upon sorrows, if anywhere other than on Thee, even though it be fixed on beautiful things outside Thee, and outside itself. Yet, these things would not exist unless they were from Thee. They rise and fall and, rising, they begin, as it were, to be; they increase, that they may be perfected; when perfected, they grow old and perish—though not all grow old, all perish. So, when they arise and tend toward being, the more quickly they grow, in order to be, the more speedily do they hasten toward non-being. Thus is their mode. So, much hast Thou given them, for they are parts of things which do not exist all at once, but, by passing out of being and by coming into being, they all constitute the whole, of which they are parts. See, in the same way is our speech continually constituted of vocal signs. For, there would not be an entire speech, if one word did not pass away, once it has given sound to its parts, that word may follow another.[55]

As a result of these things, may my soul praise Thee, O God,[56] Creator of all, but let it not be fixed upon them with the glue of love elicited by bodily perception. For, they go where they were going, toward non-being, and they disintegrate the soul with pestilential desires, since it desires to be and it loves to repose in those things which it loves. In these things there is no place, for they do not stand still; they are fleeting, and who can catch up with them with the senses of the body? Or who can grasp them, even when they are at hand? For, the senses of the body are slow, since sense be-

54 Ps. 79.4.

55 Plato has a famous discussion of the constitution of words from syllables (*Theaetetus* 202-208); however, there seems to be no evidence that Augustine read the passage in Plato.

56 Ps. 145.2. The three words, *Deus creator omnium*, are identical with the opening of a hymn of St. Ambrose as quoted below, 9.12.32.

longs to the flesh; that is its mode.[57] It is adequate for the object for which it was made, but it is not adequate for this: to hold in check those things which quickly run from their due beginning to their due end. For, in Thy Word, through which they are created, there can they hear: 'From this point, up to that.'[58]

Chapter 11

(16) Do not be vain, O soul of mine, and grow deaf in the ear of my heart because of the tumult of thy vanity. Do thou also hear: the Word Himself cries out, that thou shouldst return, and there is the place of undisturbable rest, where love suffers no abandonment, if it itself abandon not. Behold, these things pass away, so that others may come into being in their place, and so that there may be a whole, lowly though it be, made up of all its parts. 'But, do I pass away into any other thing?' says the Word of God. There, fix thy dwelling-place; there, do thou commit whatever thou dost possess from It, O my soul, who art in any event tired of deceptions. Commend to the Truth whatever of thine belongs to truth; thou wilt lose nothing of it. Thy decaying parts shall burst anew into flower, and all thy diseases shall be cured.[59] Thy withering parts shall be reformed, and renewed, and rejoined to thee. They shall not cast thee down to the

57 *modus*: a technical term with Augustine. Sometimes it means *measure;* sometimes, the *manner of being or action* of a thing, as is the case here. That *sensus* (*exterior*) is an action of the soul which requires the body to be used as an instrument is evident in Augustine's formal definition of sensation: *sensum puto esse, non latere animam quod patitur corpus* (*De quant. animae* 23.41). For the source of the '*non latere*' formula, cf. Plotinus, *Ennead.* 4.4.19.

58 On the creative ordering of all creatures, through the Word of God, see *Contra Serm. Arian.* 3.4.

59 Cf. Ps. 102.3.

level to which they descend; rather, they shall stand up with thee and abide with the ever stable and enduring God.[60]

(17) Why be perverted and follow thy flesh? Be converted, rather, and let it follow thee. Whatever thou dost perceive through it is but partial, and thou dost ignore the whole to which these parts belong; yet, they do delight thee. But, if bodily sensation were capable of grasping the whole and not merely receptive of a part of all, as a result of thy just punishment, thou wouldst desire that whatever exists in the present might pass away so that the entirety might be more pleasing to thee. Indeed, thou hearest through the same bodily sensation the words we speak, and thou dost not desire that the syllables stand firm but that they fly away, so that others may come and thou mayest hear the whole. That is ever the way with parts that compose a whole when there is no simultaneous existence of the parts composing the whole; the entirety is more delightful than the individual parts, provided all can be perceived together. But, far better than these is He who makes all things; He is our God, and He does not pass away, for nothing comes into being in His place.

Chapter 12

(18) If bodily things are pleasing, praise God for them and turn thy love back to their Maker, lest thou be displeasing in regard to these things which are pleasing to thee. If souls are pleasing, let them be loved in God, for they, too, are mutable, but when fixed on Him they become stable;[61] otherwise, they would pass and perish. Therefore, let them be loved in Him. Take up with thee to Him what souls thou canst and say to them: 'Let us love Him; He has made these

60 Cf. Ps. 101.13.
61 Cf. *De ordine* 2.6.18-19; *De civ. Dei* 8.6.

things and He is not far distant. He did not make and then go away, but they are from Him and in Him. Look, where is He, where does truth taste sweet? He is in the depths of the heart, but the heart has wandered from Him. Return into your heart, O sinners[62] and cleave to Him who has made you. Stand with Him, and you shall stand fimly; be at rest in Him, and you shall be rested. Where are you going into the rough places? Where are you going? The good which you love is from Him. But, it is only in relation to Him that it is good and sweet. It will be bitter, and justly so, for whatever is from Him is not loved justly, if one abandons Him. What is your goal in walking on and on, through difficult and toilsome ways?[63] There is no rest where you are seeking it. Seek what you are seeking, but it is not there where you are seeking. You are seeking the happy life in the area of death; it is not there. For, how could a happy life be found where there is not even life at all?

(19) 'This Life of ours came down here[64] and took up our death and slew it from the abundance of His own Life. He has thundered forth the summons for us to return from here to Him, into that hidden place, whence He first proceeded to us into that virginal womb, wherein the human creature was wedded to Him—mortal flesh, lest it always be mortal. And from thence, like a bridegroom[65] proceeding from his bedchamber, be bounded forth as a giant to run his course.[66] Nor did he delay, but ran along, crying out by

62 Cf. Isa. 46.8.
63 Wisd. 5.7.
64 Cf. John 6.33.
65 Cf. Ps. 18.6.
66 In this passage Augustine may have in mind not only Ps. 18 but also St. Ambrose's poetical paraphrase in the hymn '*Intende, qui regis Israel*' (A. S. Walpole, *Early Latin Hymns* [Cambridge 1922] 52ff.):

Procedat e thalamo suo,
Pudoris aula regia,
Geminae gigas substantiae;
Alacris ut currat viam.

words, by deeds, by death, by life, by descending, by ascending—crying out that we must return to Him. He disappeared from before our eyes so that we might return into our heart[67] and find Him. He has departed and, behold, He is here.[68] He did not wish to stay long with us, yet He did not abandon us. He went away to that place which He never left; for, the world was made by Him, and He was in this world,[69] and He came into this world to save sinners.[70] To Him my soul confesses and He heals it, for its sin was against Him.[71] O sons of men,[72] how long shall you be heavy in heart? Now, even after the descent of the Life, do you not wish to ascend and live? But, where are you ascending, when you are already on high, and have set your mouth against the heavens?[73] Descend, that you may ascend, going up to God. For you have fallen, in going up against God.'

Say these things to them, so that they may weep in the vale of tears.[74] Thus, snatch them up with thee to God, for thou sayest these things from His very Spirit, if thou speakest them burning with the fire of charity.

Chapter 13

(20) I did not know these things at that time. I loved the lower kind of beauties and I wandered into the depths, saying to my friends: 'Do we love anything but the beautiful? What, then, is the beautiful? And what is beauty? What is it that attracts us and draws us to things which we love?

67 Isa. 46.8.
68 Matt. 24.23.
69 John 1.10.
70 1 Tim. 1.15.
71 Ps. 40.5.
72 Ps. 4.3.
73 Ps. 72.9.
74 Ps. 83.7.

For, unless grace and beauty of form were in them, they certainly would not draw us to themselves.' And I took notice and saw in these bodies that it was one thing to be whole, as it were, and so beautiful, and quite another thing for something to be attractive because aptly suited to another thing, as a part of a body is to its whole, or as a shoe fits a foot, and the like. And this consideration gushed forth in my mind from the depths of my heart, so I wrote some books *On the Beautiful and the Fitting,* two or three, I think. Thou knowest, O God, for the fact has escaped me. We do not have these books now; they have strayed away from us—how, I do not know.

Chapter 14

(21) What is it that moved me, O Lord my God, to inscribe those books to Hierius,[75] an orator of the city of Rome? I did not know him personally, but I liked the man from the reports of his teaching, which was what he was famous for; some of his words I had heard and they pleased me; and, especially, because he was pleasing to other men and they gave him much praise, being struck by the fact that from a man of Syria, who had formerly studied Greek eloquence, there should have developed such a wonderful speaker in Latin as well, and that he was very learned in the things pertaining to the study of wisdom. A man is praised and loved while he is absent. Does that love penetrate to the heart of the hearer from the mouth of him who praises? Not at all. Rather, from one who loves, another catches the spark. The love one feels for one who is praised comes from

75 This Hierius cannot certainly be identified with any Hierius known elsewhere. One Hierius had a part in the revision of an early Ms. of Quintilian, and a *vicarius Africae* in 395 also had that name. See Radermacher in Pauly-Wissowa-Kroll, *Real-encyclopädie* 8.1458 (Hierios 7); cf. *ibid.* 1459 (Hierios 10) with Gibb-Montgomery on the present passage.

the belief that the praise arises from a sincere heart, or, what is the same thing, when it is a lover who sings the praises.

(22) Thus it was that at that time I loved men because of the judgment of men, not because of Thine, O my God, in whom no one is mistaken. Yet, why not as a noted charioteer, or as a hunter whose fame is spread by public enthusiasm, but far differently and seriously, as in somewhat the same way that I should wish to be praised myself? Now, I would not myself have desired to be praised and loved in the way that actors are, even though I did praise and love them myself. My choice would have been to be unknown rather than gain such notoriety, or even to be hated rather than loved that way. Where are these weights,[76] inclining to different and opposed loves, distributed in one soul? How is it that I love in another what I would not loathe and repulse in myself unless I hated it? Is not each of us a man? It should not be said that, just as a good horse is loved by a person who does not desire to be that horse, even if he could, so it also is in the case of an actor who shares our own nature. Do I, then, love in another man what I hate to be, when I, too, am a man? This being, man, is a deep mystery, and Thou, O Lord, hast numbered[77] even the hairs of his head and they are not lost in Thy sight. Yet, his hairs are more easily numbered than his feelings and the movements of his heart.

---

76 *pondera*: in Augustine's psychology, man is considered to have various appetitive inclinations impressed on his nature by God; these are called 'weights.' It is to be remembered that weight, in ancient times, was not explained by gravity, but as an internal inclination of a body to a certain place. The terminology derives from Wisd. 11.21: 'Thou has ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight.' Augustine takes measure (*mensura*) to apply to memory contents, number (*numerus*) to mind (*visio mentis*), and weight (*pondus*) to will. *Cf. De Trin.* 11.11.18. See Gilson, *op. cit*, p. 282, for a further exposition of these 'trinities.'

77 Cf. Matt. 10.30.

(23) However, that rhetorican was the kind of man whom I loved in such a way that I should have wished to be like him. In my pride, I wandered far from the truth and I was blown about with every breeze,[78] yet in my innermost depths I was guided by Thee. How do I know, and how am I so certain in my confession to Thee, that I had loved him more because of the love of his praisers than because of the things for which he was praised? Because, if, not praising him, the very same man had reviled him, and, if they had told of the same things in dispraising and contemning him, I should not have caught the spark of interest in him and I should not have been affected. Surely, the things would not have been different, nor the man himself, but only the affective attitude of the speakers. See, how the weak soul lies prostrate, never cleaving to the firmness of the truth! As the windy speech blows forth from the breasts of the conjecturers, so is the soul carried and turned, twisted and retwisted; the light is clouded over for it and the truth is not seen. And, lo, it is in front of us.

It was for me an important matter that my discourse and my scholarly works should become known to that man. If he should give his approval, my ardor would burn more brightly, but, if he should disapprove, my vain heart, empty of Thy stability,[79] would be wounded. Yet, to that question of the beautiful and the fitting, about which I wrote to him, I gladly turned my mind and brought it before the gaze of my contemplation, admiring it, with none to join me in its praises.

---

78 Cf. Eph. 4.14. The imagery of the human soul buffeted about by the winds of false doctrine is continued to the end of the chapter.

79 *soliditatis tuae*: God is the immutable standard of truth; cf. below, 7.17.23.

Chapter 15

(24) I did not yet see the turning point of such a great matter in Thy creative mind,[80] O omnipotent Being who alone performest miracles.[81] My mind still moved through corporeal forms; I defined the beautiful as that which is attractive in itself, and the fitting as that which is attractive because suited to something. I made this distinction and bolstered it with corporeal examples. I turned my attention on the nature of the mind, yet the false opinion which I had concerning spiritual things did not permit me to see the truth. The very force of the true was assaulting my eyes, yet I turned my throbbing mind from the incorporeal reality to shapes and colors and swollen masses, and, since I could not see these within the conscious soul, I was of the opinion that I could not see my soul.[82] And, since I loved the concord in virtue and hated the discord in vice, I took note of a certain unity in the former and division in the latter. The rational mind and the nature of truth and of the highest good seemed to me to be in that unity. But, I formed the unfortunate opinion[83] that in that division of irrational life there was some unknown substance, the nature of supreme evil, which was not only a substance, but also life; yet, it was not from Thee, O my God, from whom all things are.

So, I called the first a monad,[84] like a mind without any

80 *in arte tua*: the 'art' of God is His creative mind; cf. *Contra Faust.* 21.5.

81 Cf. Ps. 71.18.

82 In the mature psychology of Augustine, the claim that the soul can see itself is one of its most distinctive features; cf. *De Trin.* 9.7.12.

83 This is a statement of the Manichaean dualism of the co-eternal principles of good and evil. For the records of this dualism, in writings other than those of Augustine, cf. Alfaric, *Le écritures Man.* 1.22-30.

84 A possible source of the monad-dyad terminology is Plato, *Phaedo* 105; the language is, of course, Pythagorean, but there is no evidence that Augustine read anything from the original school of Pythagoras.

sex, and the other a dyad, thus ignorantly explaining anger in crimes against others lust, in personal vice. I did not know and had not learned that evil is not a substance and that our own mind is not the highest and immutable good.

(25) Just as offenses against others occur when the movement of the conscious mind, where the original impulse is, is vicious and when it asserts itself in unbecoming and disturbed ways, and, just as personal immoralities occur when there is an immoderate passion of the soul in which carnal pleasures are devoured, so, too, do errors and false opinions contaminate life when the rational mind itself is vicious. Such was my mind at that time when I did not know that it required to be illumined by another light,[85] so that it might participate in the truth. For the soul is not the very nature of truth, since Thou wilt light my lamp, O Lord; O my God, Thou wilt enlighten my darkness,[86] and of Thy fullness we have all received.[87] For, Thou art 'the True Light that enlightens every man who comes into the world,'[88] for in Thee there is neither 'change nor shadow of alteration.'[89]

(26) But, I was striving toward Thee and was pushed back by Thee, so that I might taste death,[90] for Thou resisteth the proud.[91] Now, what more proud than to claim with wondrous foolishness that I was that, by nature, which Thou art?[92] Since I was mutable, and that was evident to me in the

---

85 Plotinus also considered the soul to be endowed with intellectual light (*Ennead.* 5.3.8). But, in Neo-Platonism, the soul *has its own light* and so the soul is a god. It was precisely this divinizing of the soul that Augustine later strove to avoid. Cf. the excellent comments of A. C. Pegis, 'The Mind of St. Augustine,' *Mediaeval Studies* 6 (1944) 55.

86 Cf. Ps. 17.29.

87 John 1.16.

88 John 1.9.

89 Cf. James 1.17.

90 Cf. John 8.52.

91 1 Peter 5.5; James 4.6.

92 Cf. *De duabus anim.* 1.1.

fact that I certainly wished to be wise, so that I might become better from worse, I preferred even to consider Thee mutable rather than that I should not be what Thou art.

So, I was pushed back, and Thou didst resist my conceited pride. I dwelt upon the phantasms of bodily forms and, being flesh, I blamed the flesh. A wandering spirit, I was not yet on my way back to Thee, and my wandering course took me to things which exist neither in Thee, nor in me, nor in the body, nor were they created for me by Thy Truth; rather, they were fictitiously made from the body by my vanity. And I said to Thy faithful children,[93] my fellow citizens, from whom I dwelt in exile without knowing it—I said to them in my inane talkativeness: 'Why, then, does the soul err, if God has made it?' I did not want to be asked: 'Why, then, does God err?' I preferred to maintain that Thy immutable substance was forced to err rather than to admit that my mutable substance had gone astray of its own accord and that my error was my punishment.[94]

(27) I was perhaps twenty-six or twenty-seven years old when I wrote that book,[95] turning over within me the bodily fictions which stridently attacked the ears of my heart, while I was trying to direct them, O sweet Truth, to Thy inner melody, thinking of the beautiful and the fitting, and longing to stand firm and hear Thee, to 'rejoice exceedingly at the voice of the Bridegroom.'[96] But, I was not able, because I was overcome from without by the clamorings of my error, and I was cast into the depths by the weight of my pride. For, Thou didst not give joy and gladness to my hearing, nor did my bones exult, for they were not yet humbled.[97]

93 Cf. Matt. 18.3.
94 *poena*: on the *poena peccati*, cf. *De lib. arb.* 3.18.52.
95 *De pulchro et apto,* referred to above, 4.13.20; no longer extant.
96 John 3.29.
97 Ps. 50.10.

Chapter 16

(28) And what did it avail me that, when scarcely twenty years old, there had come into my hands a certain Aristotelian work which they call the ten *Categories*?[98] I was eager because interested by the name of this work, since whenever my teacher, a rhetorician in Carthage, mentioned it, his cheeks puffed out with pride, and so, too, with other persons who were considered learned, as if it were something inconceivably great and divine—and I read it by myself and understood it. When I talked it over with them, they said that they had hardly been able to understand it with the aid of the most learned teachers, using not only oral explanations, but many diagrams drawn on the sand. They were unable to tell me anything more about it than I had known from my own private reading.

It did seem to speak clearly enough of substances, such as man is; and what things exist in them, such as the shape of a man, his quality and stature—how many feet tall he is; and relation—whose brother he is; or where he is situated; or when born; or whether he is standing or sitting, or wearing shoes, or armed; or whether he is engaged in some action or undergoing some passion; and whatever innumerable things are found in these nine genera, of which I have given some examples, or in the very genus of substance.

(29) What did this avail me, when actually it was a hindrance, since I strove to understand even Thee, O my God, wonderfully simple and immutable, thinking that whatever existed is wholly comprehended by these ten predicaments, as

98 The first work in Aristotle's *Organon*, the *Categories*, contains a logical discussion of substance and the nine accidents. It was translated into Latin by Marius Victorinus, the fourth-century rhetorician, on whom see Augustine's remarks, below, 8.2.3. On the matter of the availability of this translation to Augustine, see Courcelle, *Les lettres grecques* (Paris 1943) 156.

if Thou wert the subject[99] of Thy magnitude or of Thy beauty, as if they existed in Thee as subject, as is the case in a body? Of course, Thou art Thyself Thy magnitude and Thy beauty, while a body is not great and beautiful by the fact that it is a body; even were it less great and less beautiful, it would still be a body. What I thought about Thee was falsity, not truth, and the figments of my unhappiness, not the firmness of Thy happiness. For, Thou hadst commanded, and so was it accomplished in me, that the earth should bring forth 'thorns and thistles'[100] for me and that I should gain my bread with weary toil.

(30) What did it avail me that I read by myself and understood all the books I could on the arts which they call proper to a free man,[101] when I was in fact the vilest slave of wicked lusts? I rejoiced in these readings, but remained ignorant of the origin of whatever truth and certainty there was in them. I had my back to the light and my face to the things which were illuminated; hence, my face, by which I beheld what was illuminated, was not itself illumined.[102] Thou

99 That God is not a substance distinct from His attributes is explained by Augustine in a manner which influences much later theology. Cf. *De Trin.* 7.5.10. The standard study of this aspect of Augustine's thought is Schmaus, *Die psychologische Trinitätslehre des hl. Augustinus.* 82-100; Cf., also M. Grabmann, *Die Grundgedanken des hl. Augustinus über Seele und Gott* (Köln 1929), and F. Nourrisson, *La Philosophie de s. Augustin* (Paris 1869) 2.273-299.

100 Gen. 3.18.

101 Augustine preceded the great period in the establishment of the liberal arts theory of education, which comes with Boethius and Cassiodorus in the sixth century. However, he knew the theory that certain arts are adapted to the training of free men, having planned in early life to write textbooks on these arts.

102 That the human soul is enabled to know truth with certainty, by means of divine illumination, is one of the most characteristic teachings of Augustine. The process of such illumination is variously interpreted by modern Augustinian scholars. For a survey of such interpretations and a moderate exegesis of the texts, consult E. Gilson, *Introd. à l'étude de s. Augustin* 88-147; a notably different view, stressing the affinity between illumination and Thomistic abstraction, is to be found in: C. Boyer, S. J. *L'idée de vérité dans la philosophie de s. Augustin* (Paris 1921).

knowest, O Lord my God, whatever of the art of speaking and of discussion, whatever of the dimensions of figures and of music and of numbers, I understood without much trouble and without the help of any human teacher, for swiftness of understanding and acuteness of perception is Thy gift. But, I made no sacrifice to Thee[103] in acknowledgment of it. So, it availed not for profit, but rather for injury, since I was solicitous to have such a good part of my substance in my power and did not preserve my strength near to Thee;[104] instead, I left Thee for a distant country,[105] to waste it on meretricious lusts. For, of what avail to me was a good thing, if I did not use it well? I did not perceive that these arts are only understood with greatest difficulty even by those who are studious and clever, except when I tried to explain them to these people and found that only the best of them could keep up, even slowly, with my explanation.

(31) What did it avail me, when I thought that Thou, O Lord God, my Truth, wert a body glowing and huge, and that I was a piece of that body? What an excess of perversity! But, that is the way I was, my God, and I do not blush to confess unto Thee Thy mercies[106] toward me and to call upon Thee, I who did not then blush to profess my blasphemies to men and to bark against Thee. So, what did it then avail me, that quick cleverness in those teachings and in undoing the knots of so many most knotty books without any help from a human teacher, when I went wrong in such a deformed and sacrilegiously ugly manner in regard to the teaching of what is owed to God. Or, how did it hinder Thy little ones that their minds were far slower, when they did not depart far from Thee, as long as they could safely grow their feathers

103 Cf. Ps. 53.8.
104 Ps. 58.10.
105 Luke 15.13.
106 Cf. Ps. 106.8.

in the nest[107] of Thy Church and nourish the wings of charity on the food of sound faith?

O Lord our God, let us hope under the cover of Thy wings;[108] protect us and sustain us. Thou wilt do so, Thou wilt sustain us as children and until our hair is white;[109] for, when Thou art our Strength, then it is strength indeed, but when it is our own, then it is but weakness. Our good is always a living thing with Thee, and because we have turned away from it we are perverse. Let us turn back now, O Lord, so that we may not be overturned,[110] since our good does live in Thee without any defect, for Thou art it Thyself. And we do not fear that there will be no place to which we may return, for we fell away from it to our ruin. But, in our absence, our home, Thy eternity, does not fall to ruin.

107 Cf. Ps. 83.4.
108 Cf. Ps. 16.8.
109 Isa. 46.4.
110 Note the reiteration of the concepts of turning—*aversio, perversio, reversio,* and *eversio*—in this concluding paragraph.

BOOK FIVE

Chapter 1

ACCEPT THE SACRIFICE of my Confession as the offering of my tongue, which Thou hast formed and stimulated to confess unto Thy Name. Heal all my bones and let them say: Lord, who is like unto Thee?[1] Not that he who confesses to Thee teaches Thee anything of what goes on within him, for the heart that is closed does not shut out Thine eye nor does the hardness of human beings stay Thy hand. Rather, Thou dost soften it, when Thou desirest, either in compassion or in punishment. There is no one who can hide himself from Thy heat.[2]

Rather, let my soul praise Thee, so that it may love Thee; let it confess unto Thee Thy mercies,[3] so that it may praise Thee. Thy whole creation never stops or grows silent in Thy praises—every spirit praises Thee through the mouth that is turned to Thee, and all animals and bodily things through the mouth of those who look upon them—so that our soul

1 Cf. Ps. 6.3; Ps. 34.10.
2 Ps. 18.7.
3 Cf. Ps. 106.8.

springs up to Thee from its weakness, supported by those things[4] which Thou hast made, and passing over to Thee who hast made these things so wonderfully. There, is refreshment and true strength.

Chapter 2

(2) Let those who are unquiet and evil depart, let them flee from Thee. Thou dost see them and pierce through the shadows, and, behold all things are beautiful, including these people, though they are ugly in themselves.[5] What harm can they have done Thee?[6] How could they dishonor Thy rule, to the most recent thing in existence? Where did they flee to, in fleeing from Thy face? Or where couldst Thou not find them? But, they did flee, so that they would not see Thee seeing them; so that in their blindness they might run up against Thee (for, Thou dost not abandon any thing which Thou hast made); so that they might run up against Thee in their injustice and justly be shaken up, they who have removed themselves from Thy gentleness and have run counter to Thy rightness and have fallen under Thy severity. Of course, they do not know that Thou art everywhere, for no place wholly contains Thee, and Thou alone art present even to those who become far removed from Thee.[7]

Let them turn about, then, and seek for Thee, for Thou hast not abandoned Thy creation as they have abandoned their Creator. Let them turn and seek Thee, and, behold,

4 Cf. *De vera relig.* 24.45.

5 'As in the case of a painting which has the black color in its right place, so also the whole of things (provided one can see clearly) is beautiful, even including sinners whose deformity is ugly when they are considered in themselves' (*De civ. Dei* 11.23); cf *De Gen. ad litt.* 11.21.28.

6 'In the Scriptures, those are called the enemies of God who, being opposed to His command not by nature but by vices, are unable to harm Him but only themselves' (*De civ. Dei* 12.3).

7 Cf. Plotinus, *Ennead.* 6.9.7.

Thou art there in their hearts, in the hearts of those who confess to Thee, who throw themselves upon Thee, who shed tears upon Thy bosom, after their troubled ways. Thou, in Thy graciousness, dost wipe away their tears.[8] They weep all the more and rejoice in their tears, because it is Thou, O Lord, not any man, not flesh and blood, but Thou, O Lord, their Maker, dost remake and comfort them.

And where was I myself, when I was seeking Thee? Thou wert right before me, but I had abandoned myself; nor was I able to find myself, still less Thee!

Chapter 3

(3) I shall speak out, in the sight of my God, concerning that twenty-ninth year of my life. A certain Manichaean bishop, Faustus[9] by name, had just come to Carthage. He was a great snare of the devil[10] and many people were trapped by the lure of the sweetness of his speech. Now, though I did admire this, I was becoming able to distinguish it from the truth of things which I was eager to learn. I looked not to the kind of vessel in which his discourse was served, but to what this highly reputed Faustus was putting before me as food for knowledge. For, I had heard advance reports about him, that he was most expert in all worthwhile teachings and especially learned in the liberal arts.

And, since I had read much in the philosophers and kept these things at my command in memory, I compared some

8 Apoc. 7.17; 21.4.

9 Faustus of Mileve, one of the seventy-two Manichaean bishops, was one of the best known and most capable leaders of the Manichaeans in the Roman world. He seems to have died shortly before 400, for Augustine speaks of him in the past tense (*Faustus quidam fuit . . .*), in the prologue to his long treatise against this man (*Contra Faustum Manich.* 33), written about that year. Cf., also, Alfaric, *Les écritures Man.* 2.112.

10 1 Tim. 3.7.

of these teachings with the lengthy fables of those Manichaeans. I thought more probable what had been said by those[11] who were able to know so much as to make a judgment of the world, even though they had found out the Lord thereof. For Thou art great, O Lord, and Thou dost look upon the lowly, and Thou knowest the proud from afar off,'[12] nor dost Thou draw near except to the contrite of heart. Nor art Thou found by the proud, not even if, by their curious skill, they could number the stars and the sands and measure the starry regions and trace the paths of the stars.

(4) For, they seek out these things with the mind and talent which Thou hast given them, and they have found out many things and have foretold things years in advance, eclipses of the sun and moon, on what day and at what hour, and in what degree of completeness. Their numerical calculations have not failed them and their forecasts have been borne out by actualities. And they have written down the rules that have been discovered. Today, they are still read, and from them a forecast may be made as to the year, the month in the year, the day in the month, the hour of the day, and the degree of the eclipse of the moon or sun; and thus it will be, just as predicted.

These things cause wonder and amazement among men who are ignorant about them, and those who know them feel triumphant and are highly praised. Through impious pride, falling away from and lacking in Thy great light, they foresee an eclipse of the sun, but they do not see their own eclipse in the present—for they do not search conscientiously for the source of the talent which they have, whereby they search out these things. And, when they discover that Thou hast made them, they do not give themselves to Thee so that Thou canst keep them as something Thou hast made, nor sacrifice themselves to Thee, such as they made themselves, nor

11 Wisd. 13.9.
12 Ps. 137.6.

do they slaughter their flights of pride like birds of the air and their curiosities like fish in the sea, (by these things they walk the hidden pathways of the abyss), nor their lusts like the beasts of the field, so that Thou, O God, might burn up, like a consuming fire,[13] their dead cares, creating them anew for immortality.

(5) But, they do not know the way, Thy Word, through which Thou hast made the things which they number, and the very men who do the numbering, and the power of sense by which they perceive what they number, and the mind from which they do the numbering. Of Thy wisdom there is no number.[14] He, who is Thy only-begotten Son, has become our Wisdom, Justice, and Sanctification.[15] He was numbered among us and paid his tribute to Caesar.[16] They do not know this way, by which they may go down from themselves to Him, and by which they might go up through Him to Him. They do not know this way, and they consider themselves to be as exalted as the stars and heavenly bodies. Behold, they are cast down to the earth and their foolish heart is darkened.[17] They say many true things about creation, yet they do not seek the Truth, the Artificer of creation, with piety and therefore do not discover Him. Or, if they do make this discovery, in knowing God, they do not honor Him or give thanks to Him as God. They pursue the vanities of their own cogitations[18] and they call themselves wise, attributing to

---

13 Deut. 424; Heb. 12.29. For the figurative language of this passage, cf, Ps. 8.8f. and Augustine's commentary (*Ennar in ps.* 8.13).

14 Ps. 146.5.

15 1 Cor. 1.30.

16 Matt. 22.21.

17 Cf. Rom. 1.21-25, phrases from which are imbedded in the remaining portion of this paragraph.

18 *in cogitationibus suis*: the term *cogitatio* designates a cognitive function of the human soul, whereby one gathers together some contents of one's memory preliminary to the act of "seeing' (*visio cogitantis*) their meaning (*De Trin.* 14.7.10). On *cogitatio* and *memoria,* cf. *Conf.* 10.8.12; also, R. G. Gassert, S. J., 'The Meaning of *Cogitatio* in St. Augustine,' *Modern Schoolman* 25 (1948) 238-245.

themselves what is Thine. As a result, they try, in their most perverse blindness, even to attribute to Thee what is their own; that is, they apply lies to Thee who art the Truth, and they change the glory of the uncorrupted Good to the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of winged, four-footed, and creeping things. They turn Thy Truth into a lie and worship and serve a creature rather than the Creator.

(6) Of course, I retained many things that were said truly by them, drawn from creation itself. The rational principle[19] as suggested by numbers, the order in moments of time, and the visible evidence of the stars struck me. I made a comparison with the statements of Mani[20]—for he wrote many things about these matters, being very prolix in his delirium—but I did not come upon the rational explanation of the solstices, or of the equinoxes, or of eclipses, or anything such as I had learned in the books of profane wisdom. What

19 *ratio*: a term as diversified in meaning as the Greek *lógos*. Three chief meanings: (a) a divine Idea, somewhat like a Platonic Form in the Mind of God; (b) a created principle of action and growth, particularly in the living things of this world (as, *ratio seminalis;*) (c) a function (not a faculty) of the human soul, whereby the mind (*mens*) moves so as to distinguish or connect the things which it is learning (*De ordine* 2.11.30). Cf. *De div. quaest.* LXXXIII, q. 46.2: 'With this established and conceded, who will dare to say that God has created all things irrationally? Now, if this cannot truthfully be said or believed, it follows that all things are founded on reason (*omnia ratione sint condita*). Nor is a man founded on the same reason (*ratio*) as a horse; it is absurd to think this. Therefore, the various individual things have been created by means of their own reasons. Now, where should we think that these reasons exist, if not in the very Mind of the Creator?' In the present paragraph, *ratio* approximates the meaning of 'rational explanation.'

20 It is difficult to distinguish the personal writings of Mani from those of his Gnostic predecessors and of his immediate followers. However, it is quite probable that five treatises (a Pentateuch) were regarded by Augustine as constituting the corpus: the *Fundamental Epistle*, the *Treasure of Life*, the *Book of Mysteries*, the *Book of Principles*, and the *Treatise on the Giants*. (Five was a "holy" number with the Manichaeans; Augustine wrote five anti-Manichaean works; cf., also: *Contra Felice Man.* 1.1. *init.*) For the various lists and translated fragments, cf. Alfaric, *op. cit.* 2.3-137.

I was commanded to believe, in these writings, did not jibe with those rational explanations using numbers nor with the discoveries made by my own eyes. It was far different.

Chapter 4

(7) Now, O Lord God of Truth, is a man pleasing in Thy sight simply through knowing these things? For, unhappy is the man who knows all this and ignores Thee, but happy if he knows Thee though he ignore those things. Indeed, he who knows both Thee and them is not the happier because of them, but he is happy solely because of Thee, provided that in knowing Thee as Thyself he glorifies and gives thanks and does not pursue the vanities of his own cogitations.

Just as he is better who knows how to possess a tree and gives thanks to Thee for its use, even if he is ignorant of the exact measure of its height or how wide its spread, than the man who measures it and counts all its branches, yet does not possess it, or know, or love, its Creator, so, too, the man who has faith, to whom a whole world of riches belongs, though apparently having nothing,[21] yet possesses all things by cleaving to Thee, whom all things serve. Even if he did not know the circular courses of the Great Bear, it is foolish to doubt that he is wholly better off than some measurer of the heavens, or numberer of the stars, or weigher of the elements, who pays no attention to Thee, who 'hast ordered all things in measure and number, and weight.'[22]

21 2 Cor. 6.10.
22 Wisd. 11.21.

Chapter 5

(8) Anyhow, who asked somebody called Mani to write even about these things? Piety can be learned without such knowledge. Thou hast said to man: 'Behold, piety is wisdom.'[23] Mani could have been ignorant of this, even if he knew those other things perfectly. However, since he dared to teach those matters of science with great impudence, when he did not know them, it is quite evident that he could not have known piety either. It is vanity to profess those worldly things even when they are known, but it is piety to confess to Thee. Hence, this mistaken man spoke much about these things for this reason: that he could be judged false by men who had really studied them and, thus, the value of his opinion regarding other things, which are more hidden, would be plainly known. He did not want to be considered a small man; rather, he tried to have it believed that the Holy Spirit, the Consoler and Benefactor of Thy faithful people, was present personally in him in His full authority.[24] So, when he would be caught saying false things about the heavens and the movements of the stars and the sun and the moon, even though these things do not pertain to religious teaching, it was clear that his presumptions were sacrilegious, since he would speak not only of things of which he was ignorant, but even of some that he himself had counterfeited, all with such

23 Cf. Job 28.28.

24 I. de Beausobre, *Histoire critique de Manichée et du Manichéisme* (Amsterdam 1734-1739) I,103, claimed that Mani never pretended that he was the Paraclete. While it is not possible to equate some ancient Persian notion of a 'companion of God' (what An Nadim calls, 'the angel, Al Tawam'; text in Flügel, *Mani,* p. 85) with the Christian concept of the Holy Spirit, it should be noted that the Arabian historian, Birouni, wrote that Mani claimed to be the 'Paraclete announced by Christ.' Cf. *Chronologie orientalischer Völker,* hrsg. C. E. Sachau (Leipzig 1878) ; also translated into English by Sachau, *Chronology* (London 1879) 207.

an insane vanity as to strive to attribute them to himself, as to a divine person.

(9) When I hear some Christian brother, whatever be his name, who is ignorant of these things, who thinks a thing is something other than it is, I look with forbearance upon the man who has such opinions. I see that it does not injure him when, perchance, he is ignorant of the position or disposition of bodily creation, provided he does not believe unworthy things about Thee, O Lord Creator of all things.[25] It is harmful, however, if he thinks that this pertains to the very essence of religious doctrine and if he stubbornly dares to affirm that of which he is ignorant. But, even such a weakness is borne with maternal charity in the cradle of the faith, until the new man will rise up as a perfect man[26] who cannot be blown about by every wind of doctrine.

In the case of that man,[27] that teacher, that authority, that leader and guide of those whom he had persuaded, so bold had he become that they were following in him not just any man, but they thought that they were following Thy Holy Spirit—who would not judge that such insanity, once he was convicted of making false statements, deserved to be detested and completely rejected?

However, I had not yet clearly discovered whether the changes of longer and shorter days and nights, and of night and day itself, and the eclipse of the luminous bodies and other like things which I had read about in other books could be explained consistently with his words. And, if that had been possible, I would still have remained in some doubt as to whether the thing happened in this way or in another, but I would have put his authority first as a basis for my belief because of the sanctity reputed to him.

25 2 Macc. 1.24.
26 Eph. 4.13-14.
27 Mani.

Chapter 6

(10) During almost nine of these years, in which, as my mind strayed from truth, I listened to these people, I was looking forward with an ardent desire to the advent of this Faustus. For, the others among them, with whom I had chance encounters, were unable to deal with my questions about such things, and they promised me that he would very easily give a quite clear explanation of these things, when he arrived and joined in the oral discussion, and of even greater ones which I might ask.

And so, when he did come, I perceived that he was a pleasing man, using charming language, and discoursing more smoothly about those same things of which the others customarily spoke. But, what help was it to my thirst for more precious drinks that the cupbearer was most comely? My ears were already filled with such things, nor did they seem better to me because they were better expressed, nor true because elegantly expressed; nor was the soul wise because the face was handsome or the speech graceful. Those people who had promised him to me were not good judges of things; hence, what made him appear prudent and wise was the way he delighted them when he spoke.

I have some acquaintance with another kind of man, of course, who even holds the truth suspect and refuses to accept it, if it be expressed in smooth and copious language.[28] But Thou hadst taught me already, O my God, by wondrous and hidden ways, and the reason I believe that Thou hast taught me is because it is true and Thou art alone the Teacher of the true, wherever and from whatever source it shines forth. I had then already learned from Thee that a thing should neither be regarded as true from the fact that it is eloquently said, nor false from the fact that the symbols sound

28 The whole question of the use of rhetoric in Christian apologetics is discussed by Augustine throughout *De doct. Christ.* 4.

unharmonious on the lips, or, again, that a thing is not therefore true because expressed rudely, or false because the speech is splendid. Rather, it is much the same with wisdom and folly as with edible and inedible food; both wisdom and folly can be presented in ornate or in plain language, just as both kinds of food can be served upon elegant or simple platters.

(11) And so, in that eagerness, with which I had awaited the man[29] for so long, I was delighted indeed with the vigor and feeling of the man in discussion, with the appropriateness of his words and their facile readiness to clothe his opinions. I was delighted and, along with many others, or even more so than the others, I praised and honored him. But, I was annoyed that I had no opportunity, in the mob of listeners, to put before and share with him the questions that were bothering me and to engage him in the familiar give and take of discussion. When this eventually was possible, and I with my friends began to get him to listen, at a time which was not unsuitable for mutual discussion, and I brought up some things which were disturbing me, I found at once that the man was acquainted, among the liberal arts, only with grammar, and that in a very ordinary way. Also, that he had read some of the speeches of Cicero, a very few books of Seneca, some of the poets, and whatever treatises of his own sect had been written in Latin and in literary style. Moreover, that his daily practice in speaking endowed him with an eloquence which grew more attractive and more seductive through his control of his talent and a certain natural charm.

Is not that my recollection of it, O Lord my God, Judge of my conscience? My heart and my remembrance are open before Thee,[30] who didst move me at that time by the hidden mystery of Thy providence and even then turn my shameful errors before my face so that I might see and hate them.

---

29 Faustus.
30 Cf. Num. 10.9.

Chapter 7

(12) For, after it was quite clear to me that he was unlearned in those arts in which I had thought that he excelled, I began to lose hope that it would be possible for him to clarify and resolve the matters which were troubling me. Of course, he could have been quite ignorant of these matters and still have possessed the truth of piety, but only if he had not been a Manichaean. For, their books are filled with the most lengthy fables about the heavens, the stars, the sun, and the moon.[31] Now, what I desired really from him was that a careful explanation be given me as to whether these things, in the light of the conflicting numerical explanations that I had read elsewhere, were indeed just as the books of Mani showed them, or at least whether an equally acceptable explanation could be gained from those books. That he could do this I no longer believed.

Nevertheless, when I did present these things for consideration and discussion, he quite modestly refused to take up the burden. He knew that he was ignorant of these things and he was not ashamed to confess it. He was not like those persons, whose loquacity I have often endured, who have tried to teach me these things and have said nothing. This man was possessed of a heart, though not properly directed to Thee,[32] which was, however, not lacking in prudent care of himself. He was not altogether ignorant of his own ignorance and he refused to be forced into a rash discussion of something from which there was no exit, or easy way out, for himself. Even in this, he pleased me all the more. For, the mode-

31 On the nature of these astronomical fables, cf. Alfaric, *op. cit.* 1.35-37.

32 Cf. Ps. 77.37; Acts 8.21. Heart (*cor*) is frequently used by Augustine in a spiritual sense to designate the human soul as the center of intelligent affection. Thus, the most exalted human love of God's attribution to the heart. (*Ennar. in ps.* 77.21; *Enchirid.* 9.31; *De civ. Dei* 14.13.1.)

ration of a frank mind is more beautiful than those things which I craved to know. Such did I find him in regard to all the more difficult and subtle problems.

(13) And so, when the interest which I had directed to the works of the Manichaeans was turned aside, and I was less hopeful of their other teachers, because, in the many problems which I had, that renowned master made this poor showing, I began to spend some time with him because of his own enthusiastic interest in that very literature which I was then, as a rhetorician, already teaching to the young men of Carthage. Thus, I read with him either the things he knew by repute and wanted to hear, or which I judged suitable to his natural bent.[33] For the rest, any desire of mine to make progress in that sect was definitely killed when I came to know that man. Not that I parted company with them completely, but, as one who could find nothing better than what I had already somehow or other fallen into, I had decided to be content for the time being, unless, perchance, something else which seemed preferable should appear.

Thus, that man Faustus, who had been for so many people a deadly snare,[34] unwillingly and unknowingly began now to loosen that snare of mine in which I had been caught. For, Thy hand, O my God, in the mystery of Thy providence, did not abandon my soul. So, too, from the heart's blood of my mother, through her tears, sacrifice was offered to Thee for me every day and night, and Thou didst work with me in wondrous ways. Thou didst do it, O my God. For, 'with the Lord shall the steps of man be directed: and he shall like well his way.'[35] Otherwise, how procure our salvation without Thy hand remaking what Thou hast made?

---

33 The irony in the situation is evident: Augustine waited for many years to become the student of Faustus; then became the teacher of the Manichaean scholar.

34 Ps. 17.6.

35 Ps. 36.23.

Chapter 8

(14) Thou didst work with me so that I should be persuaded to proceed to Rome and teach there what I was teaching in Carthage. I shall not neglect to confess unto Thee the reason why I was so persuaded, because in these matters, also, the great depths of Thy secret ways and Thy mercy, most intimately present to us, are to be considered and proclaimed.

I did not desire to go to Rome because a larger income and greater prestige were promised me by the friends who encouraged me in this, though these things did attract my mind at the time; instead, this was the greatest and almost the only reason: I heard that the young men studied more quietly there and were restrained in a more orderly way by strong discipline.[36] They could not rush at will, and boldly, into the school of a teacher who was not their own, nor were they admitted at all unless he gave permission. In Carthage, on the contrary, the license of the students is abominable and uncontrolled. They rush in impudently and, with almost furious faces, disrupt the order which one has established for the benefit of the students. They do many harmful things with unbelievable stupidity which should be punished by the laws, but custom is their protector. This shows them to be more wretched, since they do, as if it were legal, what will never be permitted by Thy eternal law. They think they can do it and escape punishment, when, actually, they are being punished by the very blindness of their acts, and they suffer incomparably worse things than they do.

Now, when I was a student, I refused to make these customs my own. When I was a teacher, I was compelled to bear them in others. So, it was a pleasure to go where all who knew

36 There were special legal regulations governing the students in Rome. *Cod. Theod.* XIV.9.1.

gave evidence that such things were not done. But, 'my hope and my portion in the land of the living,'[37] Thou didst apply the spur at Carthage, by which to drive me to change my earthly position for the salvation of my soul. Thou didst set before me at Rome allurements by which to attract me thither, using as means men who loved this death called life, who in one case did senseless things and in another promised vanities. Thou didst use both their perversity and my own in order to direct my steps.[38] For, those who disturbed my peace of mind were blind in their foul fury, while those who advised another place were worldly-wise, and I who detested my genuine misery in the one place desired a false felicity in the other.

(15) Thou, O God, didst know why I left Carthage and went to Rome, but Thou gavest no sign either to me or to my mother. She complained bitterly at the prospect of my leaving, and followed me to the seaside. But, I deceived her, while she was urgently trying to get me either to change my decision or to take her with me. I pretended that I did not wish to leave a friend until he could set sail with a fair wind. I lied to my mother, and such a mother, and I slipped away. Thou hast mercifully forgiven me even this, preserving me from the waters of the sea, though I was full of abominable filth, unto the water of Thy grace, to be washed by it, when the rivers of my mother's tears might then be dried up, those with which in my behalf she daily in prayer to Thee did moisten the ground beneath her countenance.

Yet, when she refused to return without me, I persuaded her with some difficulty to spend the night in a place which was near our ship, at a shrine dedicated to blessed Cyprian.[39]

37 Ps. 141.6.
38 Ps. 39.3.
39 St. Cyprian (*c.* 200-258) was Bishop of Carthage and a noted figure in the development of Catholicism in North Africa. Augustine ad-

But, on that night, I set out secretly, while she remained behind in prayer and tears. What did she ask of Thee, O my God, with so many tears, but that Thou wouldst not permit me to sail away? But Thou, taking counsel on high and giving ear to the main point of her request, didst not provide what she then asked, in order that Thou mightest do with me what she always sought.

The wind blew, filling our sail, and the shore line was lost to our sight. In the morning, she went wild with sorrow upon this shore, filling Thy ears with complaints and groans. These Thou didst reject, since Thou wert sweeping me away by means of my own desires in order to put an end to those same desires, while her sorrow chastized her fleshly longing with a just scourge. For, she loved to have me with her, as mothers do, but much more than many mothers, and she did not know what joys Thou wert to fashion for her by my absence. She did not know, and so she wept and moaned, yet by these sufferings there was demonstrated in her the heritage of Eve,[40] as she sought with groans what she had brought forth with groans. Yet, after blaming my deceptions and cruelty, she turned round again to pray to Thee on my behalf. She went away to her own home, and I to Rome.

Chapter 9

(16) Behold, I was received there by the scourge of

mired him very much, in later years. Cf. *De bapt. contra Donat.* 5.17.22; *De doct. Christ.* 2.40.61; 4.14.31. This shrine, on the waterfront, was the oldest church in Carthage dedicated to St. Cyprian. (P. Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique Chrétienne* [Paris, 1922] 2.384.) On the topography of Carthage, as Augustine knew it, cf. G. G. Lapeyre, 'Saint Augustin et Carthage,' *Miscellanea Agostiniana* II (Roma 1931) 92-100.

40 Cf. Gen. 3.16.

bodily sickness,[41] and I was now going to hell, carrying all the evils which I had committed against Thee, against myself, and against others, many and serious besides the bond of original sin whereby we all die in Adam.[42] For Thou hadst not pardoned me in Christ for any of these, nor had He destroyed by His Cross the enmities which I had contracted with Thee by my sins. For, how could He have destroyed them on a cross from which a phantom hung, which was what I had believed Him to be? Therefore, as His fleshly death appeared false to me, so was the death of my soul a true one; and, as His fleshly death was true, so was the life of my soul, which believed it not, a false one.

As the fever grew more serious, I was on my way to perdition. For, where could I go, if I had departed at that time, but to the fire and torments fitting to my actions, under the truth of Thy providence. My mother did not know of all this, yet, though absent, she continued to pray for me. But, Thou art present everywhere, and Thou didst hear her, where she was. And Thou didst have mercy on me, where I was, so that I might recover the health of my body, though unhealthy still in my sacrilegious heart.

For, I had no desire for Thy baptism, in that period of great danger. I was better as a boy, inasmuch as I did ardently request it from my holy mother, as I have already remembered and confessed.[43] However, I had increased in my infamy and, madman that I was, I mocked at Thy healing counsels. Yet, Thou didst not permit me, in such a condition,

---

41 Though not a robust man, Augustine usually enjoyed rather good health. On this 'fever' and other illnesses, cf. B. Legewie, 'Die körperliche Konstitution und die Krankheiten Augustins,' *Miscel. Agost.* 2.5-21.

42 Cf. 1 Cor. 15.22. Augustine's views on original sin underwent some development. The formal study of this point by E. Buonaiuti (*La genesi della dottrina agostiniana intorno al peccato originale* [Roma 1916] is not adequate; cf. the shorter sketch, by J. De Blic, 'Le péché originel selon s. Augustin,' *Recherches de Sc. Relig.* 16 (1926) 97-119.

43 *Conf.* 1.11.17.

to die a double death. If my mother's heart had been dealt such a wound, it never would have been healed. I am not eloquent enough to speak of the strength of her feeling for me, and of the much greater anguish which she suffered for me, in spiritual labor, than she had endured at my physical birth.

(17) Thus, I do not see how she would have been made well again, had such a death of mine blasted the vitals of her love. And where would then have been such great, such frequent, and uninterrupted prayers? Nowhere but with Thee. Wouldst Thou, O God of Mercies, have contemned the contrite and humbled heart[44] of a chaste and temperate widow, who gave alms often, was faithful in the devotion and service of Thy saints, who never missed a day in making an offering at Thy altar, who went twice a day, morning and evening without fail, to Thy church, not to listen to useless tales and old women's gossip, but to Thy words, and so that Thou wouldst hear her in her prayers? Wouldst Thou have spurned and rejected from Thy help the tears of this woman, who did not ask for gold and silver from Thee with them, nor any changeable or mutable good, but the salvation of the soul of her son: Thou, by whose favor she was such a person? Never, O Lord. Rather, indeed, wert Thou present and listening and working in Thy providence, whereby Thou hadst foreordered that it should be done. Perish the thought that Thou wouldst have deceived her in those visions and in Thy answers which I have already related and in those which I have not mentioned. These she kept in her faithful breast and, unceasing in her prayers, she would urge them upon Thee as if they had been Thy own signed pledges. Since Thy mercy endureth forever,[45] Thou dost vouchsafe to become, by Thy promises, a debtor to those whose entire debt Thou hast forgiven.

---

44 Ps. 50.19.
45 Cf. Ps. 117.1.

Chapter 10

(18) And so, Thou didst restore me to health from that illness and Thou didst save the 'son of Thy handmaid,'[46] in a bodily way at that time, so that Thou mightest give him a better and more certain salvation thereafter.

I was associating even then, in Rome, with those false and fallacious 'saints':[47] not just with their auditors, to which rank belonged the man in whose home I recuperated and regained my health, but even with those whom they call the 'elect.' For, up to that time, it seemed to me that it is not we who sin, but some other unknown nature within us which sins. It was a joy to my pride to be set apart from culpability, and, when I had done some evil thing, not to confess that I had done it (so that Thou mightest heal my soul[48] because it was sinning against Thee), but I loved rather to excuse myself and accuse some other unknown being which existed with me and yet was not I. In truth, of course, the whole thing was myself, and my impiety had divided me against myself. This sin was all the more incurable because I did not consider myself to be a sinner. My hateful iniquity was such that I preferred that Thou, O omnipotent God, shouldst be overcome in me and for my own destruction, rather than that I should be overcome by Thee for my salvation.

So, Thou hadst not yet set a watch upon my mouth[49] and a door of safekeeping about my lips, so that my heart would not slip back into wicked words in order to fashion excuses from sins with men who are workers of iniquity. So, until then, I associated with their elect, but now, losing hope that I could make any progress in that false teaching, I fol-

46 Ps. 115.16.
47 Note that Augustine does not say here that he was one of the elect. He expressly denies it, elsewhere (*Contra Faust.* 1.3).
48 Ps. 40.5.
49 This phrase and most of the sentence are from Ps. 140.3f.

lowed its tenets with a slackness and negligence, determined to acquiesce in them only if I could find nothing better.

(19) Indeed, the thought even arose within me that those philosophers called the Academics[50] were more prudent than other men, in thinking that one should doubt everything and in judging that nothing of truth can be grasped by man. For, that was clearly the way that they seemed to me to think, as they are commonly regarded, though I had as yet no real understanding of their meaning.

I did not neglect to criticize my host's overcredulity, which I felt he had in regard to the fabulous things with which the Manichaean books were filled. I continued, however, in closer friendship with the Manichaeans than with other men who did not belong to this heresy. I did not defend it with my original zeal, but their friendship (Rome concealed a good many of them) made me less eager to seek anything else, particularly since I had no hope of finding the truth in Thy Church, O Lord of heaven and earth,[51] Creator of all things visible and invisible. They had turned me away from it, and it seemed disgraceful to me to believe that Thou wert possessed of the shape of human flesh and limited by the bodily outlines of our corporeal parts. And since, when I wished to think of my God, I knew no way of thinking, except in terms of corporeal mass (for it seemed to me that nothing whatever existed which was not like that), in that lay the greatest and practically the only reason for my inescapable error.

(20) As a result, I believed that there was some such

50 The Academic philosophers were teachers in the Platonic school during the third and second centuries B.C. Arcesilaus and Carneades are the best-known names in this period of the Middle Academy. They wrote nothing and are regarded as skeptics, i.e., they thought that the wise man will not give assent to any judgment. Augustine knew them chiefly through the *Academica* of Cicero. An historical sketch of the school is given by Augustine in *Contra Acad.* 3.17-19. This dialogue is a formal refutation of skepticism.

51 Matt. 11.25.

substance of evil which possessed its own foul and formless mass, either gross, which they called earth, or thin and subtle, like an ethereal body: they pictured it as a malignant mind creeping over the earth. Since my piety, such as it was, forced me to believe that a good God had not created any bad nature, I set up two mutually opposed masses, both infinite, but the evil smaller, the good larger. From this plague-breeding beginning, other sacrilegious consequences followed for me.

When my mind attempted to run back over the Catholic faith, it was beaten back, for the Catholic faith was not what I thought it to be. I felt that I was more pious, if I believed that Thou, O my God, to whom Thy mercies to me do now confess,[52] wert infinite in all Thy parts, except that on one side, where the evil mass was opposed to Thee, I was compelled to admit that Thou wert limited,—more pious in so believing than if I were to think that Thou wert limited on all sides by the shape of a human body.[53] I also felt it was better for me to believe that Thou hadst created no evil (which in my ignorance seemed to be not only a substance, but even something corporeal, for I did not know how to think even of a mind except as being a subtle body, a body, however, spread out in different parts of space) than to think that the nature of evil, such as I considered it to be, could come from Thee. Thus, I was of the opinion that our Saviour, Thy Only-begotten Son, was, as it were, projected from the main bulk of Thy most luminous mass for our salvation. I believed nothing else about Him but what I could imagine in my vanity. I thought that a nature such as His could not be born

52 Cf. Ps. 106.8.

53 Still under the influence of Manichaeanism, Augustine pictured God as limited only on one side, by the opposing Principle of Evil. He thought that the Catholic teaching required one to picture God as limited on all sides by the shape of the human body of Christ. The Manichaeans regarded the Incarnation as anthropomorphism; cf. Alfaric, *op. cit.* 2.162-164.

of the Virgin Mary, without some mingling with the flesh. But, how that which I pictured to myself could thus be mingled without defilement, I did not see. Hence, I was afraid to believe in the Incarnation, lest I be compelled to believe that He was defiled by the flesh.

Nowadays, Thy spiritual-minded people will laugh at me, in a sympathetic and loving way, if they read these confessions of mine. But, that is the way I was.

Chapter 11

(21) Furthermore, I thought it impossible to defend the passages in the Scriptures that the Manichaeans found fault with. But, sometimes, I did wish to confer on detailed points with some person who was very learned in these books, and to find out at first hand what he felt about it. The talks of a certain Elpidius,[54] who spoke and disputed in public even in Carthage against these Manichaeans, already had begun to make some impression upon me, for he brought forward certain texts which could not be readily withstood. The Manichaeans' answer seemed weak to me. In fact, they did not offer it readily in public, but secretly to us. They said that the text of the New Testament had been falsified by some persons or other who wished to engraft the Jewish law upon the Christian faith.[55] However, they themselves brought forward no copies of the uncorrupted text.

But, those 'masses' were pressing down upon me—thinking, as I did, in terms of bodies—and held me, as it were, par-

54 Nothing is known of this Elpidius. He is not to be confused with the sixth-century hymn writer, Elpidius Rusticus. Cf. B. Altaner, *Patrologie* (2nd ed., Freiburg i.B. 1950) p. 450.

55 The Manichaeans maintained that the New Testament, as read by Catholics, was corrupted by borrowings from the Old Testament, which latter they did not accept; cf. *Contra Faust.* 32.7.

alyzed and suffocated. Panting under their weight, I could not breathe the clear and pure air of Thy Truth.

Chapter 12

(22) And so, I began to work diligently at the job for which I had come, to teach the art of rhetoric in Rome and, as a beginning, to gather together some pupils in my lodging, to whom and through whom I started to become better known. And, lo, I found out that certain things were done in Rome which I had not suffered in Africa. It had become clear to me, in fact, that those schoolboy pranks done there by profligate adolescents did not go on here. 'But, without warning,' people said, 'many pupils conspire to avoid paying the fees to their teacher and transfer to another—breakers of their word, who hold justice cheap through their love of money.'

My heart hated these people, too, thought not with a perfect hate.[56] For, I probably hated the fact that I might suffer from them, rather than the fact that they did unjust things to others.

Certainly, such people are immoral; they fornicate against Thee[57] by loving fleeting things, at which time mocks, and muddy money which soils the hand that grasps it, and by embracing the transient world, while despising Thee who dost remain and recall and forgive the meritriciousness of the human soul, provided it returns to Thee. Even now I hate such people, in their depravity and crookedness, even though I strive to correct them so that they may prefer the teaching itself, which they are learning, to money, and yet that they

---

56 Cf. Ps. 138-22 and Augustine's comment thereon in the *Enarrationes*.
57 Cf. Ps. 72.27.

may prefer Thee, who art God, the Truth and bountiful Source of real goodness and most chaste peace, to it. But, at that time, I was more inclined to refuse to suffer these evil people on my own account than to desire that they be made good on Thy account.

Chapter 13

(23) After a time, a request was sent from Milan[58] to the prefect of Rome that a master of rhetoric be provided for that city, and he was to travel by public conveyance. I myself made the round of those men who were intoxicated with Manichaean vanities (from whom my departure was to separate me, though neither they nor I were aware of it) so that I might be granted an audition, and, when approved, the prefect, who was Symmachus[59] at that time, would send me.

So I came to Milan,[60] to Ambrose the bishop,[61] known throughout the world as one of the best of men, Thy reverent servant. At that time, his eloquent words were busily dis-

58 Milan was, at this time, the residence of the Western Roman emperors and a very important city.

59 Q. Aurelius Symmachus was not only Prefect of Rome, but a noted literary figure. It was probably in his private capacity as an authority on rhetoric that he was asked to find a teacher of rhetoric who would be paid by the city of Milan.

60 Since Symmachus was Prefect of Rome 384-5, and since Augustine arrived in Milan before Bauto's consulate (*Contra litt. Petil.* 3.25.30) and delivered an oration in Bauto's honor during January 385, it is clear that Augustine went to Milan in 384. This is confirmed by Augustine's statement (*Conf.* 6.11.18) that he was in his thirtieth year when he found that Ambrose had little leisure to devote to Augustine.

61 St. Ambrose was one of the great Fathers of the Latin Church. He was Bishop of Milan from 374 to 397. One of the best studies of his important position, not only in religious matters, but in the political life of the late Empire, is J. R. Palanque, *S. Ambroise et l'empire romain. Contribution a l'histoire des rapports de S. Ambroise et de l'Etat à la fin du IVe siècle* (Paris 1933); also informative is F. H. Dudden, *The Life and Times of St. Ambrose* (Oxford 1935).

tributing the fat of Thy wheat,[62] and the gladness of Thy oil,[63] and the sober intoxication[64] of Thy wine to Thy people. Unknowingly, I was led to him by Thee, so that through him I might knowingly be led to Thee.

This man of God[65] received me in a paternal way and welcomed my visit with episcopal dignity. I began to like him, though not at first as a teacher of the truth, for I had definitely given up hope of finding the truth in Thy Church, but rather as a man who was kind to me. I carefully listened to his public discourses, not with the intention that I should have had, but, as it were, to try out his eloquence: as to whether it was in keeping with his fame, whether he was more or less fluent than rumor had it. Upon his words I hung attentively, but of his subject matter I stood by heedless and contemptuous. I was delighted by the sweetness of his language, which, though more learned, was less diverting and charming than that of Faustus—as regards form, I mean; in subject matter there was no comparison between them, for Faustus was carried away by Manichaean fallacies, while this man taught the soundest way of salvation. But salvation is far removed from sinners,[66] such as I was at that time. Yet, I was drawing closer, gradually and without knowing it.

---

62 Cf. Ps. 80.17; 147.14.

63 Cf. Ps. 44.8.

64 Cf. St. Ambrose's hymn, '*Splendor paternae gloriae*': 'Let us drink with gladness the sober intoxication of the Spirit' (Walpole, *Early Latin Hymns* 35-39).

65 Cf. 4 Kings 1.9; Deut. 33.1.

66 Ps. 118.155.

Chapter 14

(24) Although I was not interested in learning the things he talked about, but only in listening to the way that he spoke (indeed, that vain interest had stayed with me, though I was now without hope that a way lay open to Thee for man), the meanings, which I was not heeding, came into my mind along with the words which held my love. Nor could I keep these things distinct. As I opened my heart to catch his eloquence, the truth that he spoke entered in at the same time, but only gradually.

What first happened was that I began to see that his teachings were capable of defense. The Catholic faith, for which I had considered nothing could be said in reply to the attacks of the Manichaeans, I now began to regard as susceptible of being maintained without temerity. This was especially so when I heard, rather often, one after another of the obscure passages from the Old Testament being explained, passages wherein I was slain when I took them literally.[67] Thus, when many texts from these books had been expounded in a spiritual sense, I now came to reprove my despair, which had led me to believe that the haters and mockers of the Law and the Prophets were altogether incapable of being resisted.

However, I did not yet feel that I should embrace the Catholic way, simply because it could have its learned exponents who refuted criticisms fully and without absurdity. Nor was the view which I then held to be condemned, just because one side of the defense could hold its own. Just as the Catholic side did not appear to me to have been conquered, so, too, it did not yet seem to be the conqueror.

(25) Then, indeed, I directed all the power of my mind to convict the Manichaeans of error by means of definite

67 Cf. 2 Cor. 3.6: 'for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life.

proofs, if that were in any way possible to me. If I had been able to think of a spiritual substance,[68] all their stratagems would have been immediately destroyed and cast away from my mind. But, I could not. In truth, I did decide, by making more and more considerations and comparisons, that most of the philosophers had views which are much more probable, concerning the corporeal aspects of this world and every nature accessible to bodily sensation.

Thus, in the manner of the Academics, as they are commonly regarded,[69] I was in doubt about all things and took no definite position among all, but I decided that the Manichaeans were to be abandoned. I did not think that I should remain in that sect, during that period of my doubt, for I now preferred some of the philosophers to it. But, I refused altogether to commit the care of my sickly soul to those philosophers because they were without the health-giving name of Christ.

Therefore, I resolved, for the time being, to be a catechumen in the Catholic Church which had been recommended to me by my parents, until some light of certainty[70] might appear, to which I could direct my course.

---

68 The incapacity to conceive of spiritual substance remains a stumbling-block with Augustine, until he reads some Neo-Platonic philosophy. Cf. *infra*, 7.9.13; 20.26; *De beata vita* 1.4. For the view that it was Plato, rather than Plotinus, whom Augustine read before his conversion, cf. L. Schopp, *The Happy Life by St. Augustine* (St. Louis 1939) 138-139 n. 12.

69 Augustine knew the persistent tradition that the Academics had an esoteric doctrine which was concealed by the profession of skepticism.

70 For a further account of this period of indecision, cf. *De util. cred.* 20.

BOOK SIX

Chapter 1

WHERE WERT THOU, 'O My Hope from youth,'[1] and whither hadst Thou retired afar off?[2] Hadst Thou not made me and distinguished me from the beasts of the earth, making me wiser than the fowls of the air?[3] I was wandering about through the darkness and over slippery ways,[4] seeking Thee outside[5] myself, not finding the God of my heart.[6] I had come to the depths of the sea.[7] I lost confidence and was in despair of finding the truth.

My mother, strong in her piety, had already come to me, following me over land and sea, safe in Thee through all dangers. For, at moments of danger during the sea passage, she had reassured the sailors themselves, by whom inexperienced travelers across the bottomless depths are usually

1 Ps. 70.5.
2 Ps. 10.1 (acc. to the Hebrews).
3 Job 35.11.
4 Ps. 34.6.
5 *te foris a me*: *cf. De vera relig.* 39.72: *'noli foras ire, in teipsum redi; in interiore homine habitat veritas.* (Do not go out, go back into thyself; truth dwells in the inner man).
6 Ps. 72.26.
7 Ps. 67.23.

reassured when frightened; she promised them a safe arrival,[8] for Thou hadst promised this to her in a vision.

She found me in serious danger because of my despair of discovering the truth. However, when I pointed out to her that I was no longer a Manichaean but not yet a Catholic Christian, she heard it as if it were not unexpected and she was not overcome with joy, since she already felt safe in regard to this aspect of my wretchedness, in which she wept for me as for one dead but destined to be restored to life by Thee. She was offering me on the bier of her thoughts, so that Thou wouldst say to the son of the widow:[9] 'Young man, I say to thee, arise!' and he would come back to life and begin to speak again and Thou wouldst return him to his mother. And so, her heart did not beat with turbulent joy when she heard that the event, for whose accomplishment she had wept every day, had already come about in such great part that, though I had not yet attained the truth, I was now freed from error. Nay, rather, since she was certain that Thou wouldst also give the remainder of Thy complete promise, most calmly and with her breast full of confidence, she replied to me that she believed in Christ that before she would depart from this life she would see me a faithful Catholic. And this is what she said to me. To Thee, however, O Fountain of Mercies, went her prayers and her more abundant tears, so that Thou wouldst make haste to help me and enlighten my darkness.[10] She hastened with greater zeal to the church, and hung upon the words of Ambrose, as to a fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting.[11] She came to love this man as an angel of God,[12] for she knew that he had led me to this uncertainty of doubt, by means of which I was to pass

8 For a similar experience of St. Paul, cf. Acts 27.21-26.
9 The story of the widow of Naim, Luke 7.11-17.
10 Ps. 69.2; 17.29.
11 John 4.14.
12 Gal. 4.14.

from illness to health by going through a still more serious danger, as if through that paroxysm which physicians call the crisis; and she was quite certain in this hope.

Chapter 2

(2) And so, when she brought gruel, bread, and wine to the shrines of the saints, as she had been accustomed to do in Africa, she was stopped by the doorkeeper. When she learned that the bishop had forbidden this, she accepted it so reverently and obediently that I myself was amazed at how easily she became an incriminator of her own custom, rather than an adjudicator of this prohibition. For, the love of wine did not attack her spirit, nor did the fondness for wine move her to the hatred of truth, as in the case of many men and women who are nauseated by a sober celebration,[13] as drunkards are at the prospect of a watery drink. But, when she would bring her bread basket filled with the festival foods to be tasted and distributed, she would pour no more than a small cup, diluted for her temperate taste, and that taken as a gesture of honor. If there were many shrines of the dead to be honored in this way, she carried around the same one drink to be offered at each place, and she would share this with the others present in small sips, even though it had become not only very watery but also quite warm. In this practice her purpose was not self-indulgence, but reverence.

Thus, when she found out that a ruling had been made by this pre-eminent preacher, by this prelate of piety, to the effect that these practices were forbidden even to those who engaged in them with sobriety, she willingly gave it up, lest any occasion for excessive drinking be given to the intem-

13 *canticum sobrietatis*: Augustine advised more spiritual celebrations, scriptural readings, and the chanting of the Psalms.

perate and because these practices smattered of the superstitious ancestor-worship[14] of the non-believers. She learned to take a breast filled with more purified offerings, in place of the basket filled with earthly fruits, to the shrines of the martyrs. Thus, she gave what she could to the needy and in this way the communion of our Lord's Body was celebrated there, where the martyrs had been sacrificed and crowned in imitation of His Passion.

Still, it seems to me, O Lord my God, and such is the feeling of my heart on this matter before Thy sight,[15] that my mother perhaps would not have so easily yielded to this cutting off of her custom, had it been prohibited by anyone else whom she did not love as much as Ambrose. She loved him chiefly because of my salvation, while he loved her because of her very religious behavior, shown as much in her good works as in the fervent spirit with which she went regularly to church; so that, when he saw me, he would often break out into praise of her, felicitating me on having such a mother. But, he did not know what a son she had in me, who was in doubt about all things, and who thought there was little possibility that the way of life could be found.[16]

Chapter 3

(3) In my sighing I had not yet begun to pray for Thee to come to my assistance. But my mind was intent upon the quest and anxious for discussion. I regarded Ambrose himself

14 *parentalia*: a pagan festival held February 18-21, in honor of deceased relatives. Converts from paganism often continued to use certain pagan ceremonies, and this was tolerated in the early Church, provided the rites were harmless or had some patriotic significance. Augustine later discouraged the practice of taking wine at the tombs, when he became a bishop in North Africa (*Epist.* 29.9-10; 22.3.-6.)

15 Cf. Ps. 68.21.

16 Prov. 6.23.

as a man who was fortunate in the view of the world, greatly honored, as he was, by so many men of importance. Only his celibate life seemed a burden to me. As to the hope he bore within him, the struggles he had with temptations associated with his lofty position, his consolation in adversities, the sweet joy with which the hidden mouth of his heart partook of Thy Bread, I had no inkling or experience.

Nor did he know my anxieties, nor the pitfall which threatened me. I was unable to seek what I wanted from him, in the way I wanted, since there were throngs of busy people who cut me off from his ear and mouth, men to whose weaknesses he ministered. And, when he was not with them, which was a very little part of the time,[17] he was either refreshing his body with necessary sustenance or his mind with reading.

As he read, his eyes scanned the pages and his heart searched out the meaning, but his voice and tongue were silent.[18] Often, when we were present (and he never forbade entry to anyone, nor was it the custom for a visitor to be announced), we saw him reading quietly in that way and never in any other. After sitting silently for a long time (for who would dare to impose a burden on one so engrossed?) we would depart, thinking that in the small time that he had to himself to refresh his mind, free from the noise of other people's troubles, he preferred not to be distracted by something else; that, perhaps, he was afraid lest some listener following it with great interest might ask him about some more obscure passage which he was reading—and then it would

---

17 On the many duties of a bishop, such as St. Ambrose, in this period, cf. P. De Labriolle, *Hist. de la litt. lat. Chrét.*, rev. G. Bardy (Paris 1947) 1.382-384. Cf. Possidius, *Vita Augustini* 29-30, for Augustine's busy days.

18 It seems to have been common practice in the ancient world to read aloud, even in private. This passage implies that Ambrose was an exceptional scholar because he did not. Cf. E. Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa* (Leipzig 1922) 1.6. Books were unrolled from one cylinder to another in the process of reading.

be necessary to explain it or to discourse upon the more difficult problems and, having given time to this task, he would read fewer volumes than he desired. However, it was quite possible that the more correct reason for his silent reading was for the sake of keeping his voice, which, in his case, was easily made hoarse. Anyhow, whatever his purpose was in doing this, this man had a good reason for doing it.

(4) But, the truth is that no opportunity presented itself for me to ask the questions I desired of Thy holy oracle in his breast, except when he would give brief attention to something. My mental anxieties needed considerable free time on his part, so that they could be poured forth to him, but they never found it. I did indeed hear him giving right explanations of the word of truth[19] to the people every Sunday, and I grew more and more certain that all the knots of deceitful calumny, which those deceivers[20] of ours had tied around the divine books, could be undone.

Indeed, when I learned that 'for man to be made by Thee to Thy Image'[21] was not understood by Thy spiritual children, whom Thou hast regenerated from Mother Church through grace, as if they believed and thought in terms of a limitation by the shape of a human body, though I had not even a vague and obscure[22] suspicion of how a spiritual substance is constituted, I was glad to blush at the fact that I had barked for so many years, not against the Catholic faith, but against the pure fictions of fleshly thoughts. What made my action even more rash and irreverent was that I had spoken out in accusation against those teachings which I should have learned by interrogation. Thou, however, who art very exalted and yet near, very much hidden and yet most intimately present, whose members are not some greater and some

19 2 Tim. 2.15.
20 The Manichaeans.
21 Cf. Gen. 9.6.
22 Cf. 1 Cor. 13.12.

smaller, but who art entirely in every place and yet belongest to no place, certainly Thou art not this corporeal shape, even though Thou hast made man to Thy image,[23] and see how he is fixed in place from his head down to his feet.

Chapter 4

(5) And so, since I did not know how this, Thy image, subsists, I should have inquiringly proposed this question, how it should be believed, and I should not have insultingly opposed it as something already believed. Thus, the concern as to what I might hold as certain was sharper as it gnawed my vitals, the more I grew ashamed that, having been toyed with and deceived for such a long time by a promise of certainty, I had, with a childish error and rashness, babbled of so many uncertain things as if they were certain. For, it afterwards became clear to me that they were uncertain. It was certain that they were uncertain, and that I had at one time regarded them as certain, when with blind accusations I criticized Thy Catholic Church, though I had not yet ascertained that it taught the truth and did not teach those things which I had harshly alleged against it. So, I was confounded, I was converted, I was overjoyed, O my God, that the only Church, the Body[24] of Thy Only [Son,], in which the name of Christ had been impressed upon me as an infant, did not savor infantile trifles, and did not maintain, as a part of its sound doctrine, that through giving Thee the shape of human members it could press Thee, the Creator of all things, into the space of a definite location, which, however large and vast, was still bounded on all sides.

(6) I rejoiced, too, that the ancient writings of the Law

23 Cf. Gen. 1.26; Eccli. 17.1.
24 Cf. Col. 1.24.

and the Prophets were no longer put before me to be read with that vision whereby they had heretofore seemed absurd, when I charged Thy holy people with thinking in a certain way, though they did not actually hold such opinions. And I listened with joy to Ambrose, saying often in his sermons to the people, as though he were most carefully commending it as a rule: 'the letter kills but the spirit gives life.'[25] When, having lifted the mystic veil, he laid bare the spiritual meaning of those things which seemed to teach error when taken literally, he said nothing that offended me, though I still did not know whether his statements were true. I was keeping my heart from all assent, fearing a sudden fall, yet by this suspension [of assent] I was, instead, being killed. For, I desired to be as certain of those things which I could not see as I was sure that seven and three are ten.[26] I was not so demented as to think that this proposition could not be comprehended, but I longed for other things to be understood just as this, whether bodily things which were not wholly evident to my senses, or spiritual things of which I was unable to think, unless corporeally.

Now, I could have been cured by believing. Then the gaze of my mind,[27] now purified, could have been directed in some way to Thy ever abiding and unfailing Truth.[28] However, as often happens in the case of one who was known a bad physician, and who fears to put himself in the care of even a good one, so was it in the case of the health of my soul, which could not be cured except by believing. It refused to be

---

25 2 Cor. 3.6.

26 Augustine frequently uses mathematical examples of true judgments. Cf. *De lib. arb.* 2.8.21: 'but seven and three are ten; and not only now, but for ever; nor have seven and three ever, at any time, not been ten; nor will seven and three at any time not be ten. So, I maintain that this incorruptible numerical truth is common to myself and any other reasoning being.'

27 *acies mentis*: cf. above, 3 n. 21.

28 Ps. 116.2.

cured lest it believe what is false, resisting Thy hands,[29] Thou who hast prepared the remedies of faith and hast spread it upon the sick of all this earth and hast given such efficacy to these remedies.

Chapter 5

(7) Still, as a result of this, I now preferred the Catholic teaching, feeling that it was more moderate and less open to error in the fact that it ordered belief in what was not demonstrated (whether there could be such demonstration, though not, perhaps, for everyone, or whether none could be given) than to make a mockery of belief by a rash promise of scientific knowledge, and then to command that so many most fabulous and absurd things be believed, because they could not be demonstrated.

Then, gradually, with a most gentle and merciful hand, Thou didst influence and settle my heart in the consideration of how many things I believed without seeing them[30] or being present when they occurred—for instance, so many things in the history of peoples, so many things about places and cities which I had not seen, so many things in my relations with friends, with physicians, with these men and those, which, unless believed, would render it impossible for us to do anything in this life, and finally with what faith I held an unshakeable conviction concerning the parents from whom I had taken my origin, something which I could not know unless I believed what I heard. By all this Thou didst persuade me that the men who are guilty and unworthy to be heard are not those who believe in Thy books, which

---

29 Cf. Ps. 16.8.

30 On this question, Augustine wrote *De fide rerum quae non videntur,* shortly after finishing the *Confessions.* A translation of this work is in Volume 4 of the present series (New York 1937).

Thou hast established as authoritative amongst nearly all peoples, but rather those who do not believe and who say to me: 'How do you know that these books have been offered to mankind by the Spirit of the one true God, the supreme Fountain of Truth?' This was precisely the point that challenged my belief, since no quarrelsome attack, arising from the malicious queries which I had read in such abundance in the works of mutually opposed philosophers, was able to compel me ever to come to disbelieve either in Thy existence, whatever Thou art—and that I knew not—or in the fact that the governance of human affairs pertains to Thee.[31]

(8) Sometimes I believed this more firmly, sometimes more weakly, but I always believed both that Thou dost exist and that Thou dost take care of us, though I remained ignorant both of what should be thought concerning Thy substance and of what way might lead, or lead one back, to Thee. Thus, since we were too weak[32] to discover the truth by clear reasoning, and because, as a result, we had need of the authority of holy Scripture, I had already started to believe that Thou wouldst never have granted such high authority throughout every land to that Scripture, unless Thou hadst willed that we believe in Thee through it and that we seek Thee through it.

For, when I had heard a probable explanation of many parts of them, I now attributed that absurdity, which had been a customary source of offense for me in those writings, to the profundity of their mysteries. Then, too, that authority seemed to me to be all the more venerable and more worthy of a sacrosanct faith, in that, while readily available to be

---

31 Though Augustine is criticizing the pagan philosophers here, he uses the language of one of them (Cicero) in stating his own views: 'They first teach us that the gods are, then what they are, then that the world is administered by them, finally that they take thought for human affairs' (*De natura deorum* 2.1.3).

32 Rom. 5.6.

read by all men, it yet kept the grandeur of its mystery under a more profound sense; by clear language and simple style making itself available to all men, yet exercising the intent study of those who are not lightminded,[33] so that it took all men to its democratic bosom and yet, by means of its difficult passages, it allowed but few[34] to advance through to Thee—few, but many more than if it failed to reach such a height of authority, or if it failed to draw such crowds of people into the lap of its holy humility.

I thought over these things, and Thou wert present with me. I sighed, and Thou didst hear me. I wavered about, and Thou didst guide me. I walked the wide way of the world,[35] and Thou didst not abandon me.

Chapter 6

(9) I was eager for honors, wealth, and marriage, but Thou wert laughing at me. In these desires, I suffered the most bitter hardships, and Thou wert all the more kind the more firmly Thou didst forbid me to find sweetness in anything not Thyself. See my heart, O Lord, who hast desired that I should keep this in my heart and confess it unto Thee. Now let my soul, which Thou hast freed from the so tenacious gum of death, cleave to Thee.

How wretched it was! Thou didst prick its sensitive wounds, so that, leaving all else aside, it would be converted to Thee, who art above all things[36] and without whom nothing at all would be—so that it would be converted and healed. How wretched I was! How Thou didst manage that

33 Cf. Eccle. 19.4.
34 Cf. Matt. 7.14.
35 Cf. Matt. 7.13.
36 Cf. Rom. 9.5.

I should feel my wretchedness on that day when I was preparing to recite the praises of the emperor,[37] in which I was to tell many lies, by which lies favor was to be gained from those who knew [the truth]. My heart was gasping over these concerns and seething with the feverish thoughts that were consuming it. While walking along a certain street in Milan, I noticed a poor beggar, who was, I believe, already drunk; he was making jokes and feeling hilarious. I sighed and spoke to the friends with me of the many sorrows attendant upon our foolishness. For, with all our great efforts (and I was then laboring at one such task, carrying the burden of my infelicity, under the goad of cupidity, and increasing it as I dragged it along) we yet wanted nothing else than to achieve the unconcerned joy which this beggar had already obtained before us, and which perhaps we would never reach. For, what he had already attained by means of a few small coins which he had begged, I was approaching with such toilsome twistings and turnings—that is, the joy of temporal happiness. Of course, he did not have true joy, but I was seeking a much falser kind with these twisted aspirations. Certainly, he was happy, while I was in anxiety; he was carefree, while I was careworn. If anyone had questioned me, whether I preferred to rejoice or to be afraid, I should have answered: 'to rejoice.' But, if again he asked, whether I should have liked to be like the beggar or as I then was, I should have chosen to be myself, even though consumed with cares and fears; but my choice would have been wrong, for how could I know what was right? I should not have set myself above him because I was more learned, for that brought me no joy; rather, I sought to please man by it—not to teach them, simply to please them.

---

37 This can hardly be the oration in honor of the Consul Bauto (*Contra litt. Petil.* 3.25), as several annotators have tried to describe it: more probably, it was another speech in honor of the Emperor Valentinian II.

That is how Thou didst crack my bones with the rod of Thy discipline.[38]

(10) Let them, then, depart from my soul who say to it: 'It is important where a men gets his joy.[39] That beggar was made joyful by winebibbing; you desired to rejoice in glory.' In what glory, O Lord? The kind which is not in Thee. For, just as that was not true joy, so this was not true glory, and it twisted my mind all the more. That man was going to sleep off his intoxication that same night, but I had slept and risen and would sleep and rise again with mine—see, for how many days! Yet, it is important where a man gets his joy; I know it. The joy of a man who is faithful in hope is incomparably different from that empty joy. But, even then, there was a difference between us; in fact, he was by far the happier, not merely in the fact that he was flooded with mirth, while I was eviscerated with worries, but even more in the fact that he had obtained the wine by wishing good luck to people,[40] while I was seeking vainglory by telling lies.

I said many things in this same vein, at that time, to my friends. I often turned my attention on my condition, in similar situations, and I discovered that it was bad. I became sad, and thus I multiplied its evil. If good fortune happened to smile, there was no inclination to grasp it; for, almost before it could be caught, it would fly away.

Chapter 7

(11) We who were living through these things together

38 Cf. Ps. 41.11; 50.10; Isa. 38.13.

39 As Gibb and Montgomery remark (*Conf.* p. 148.24), Augustine does not here deny the general truth of this principle, but rather its particular application to himself in this case. This, the sequence of the paragraph indicates.

40 Apparently, the beggar would wish good fortune to passersby in hope that they would give him alms.

as friends made common complaint of them. I talked about them mostly and in greatest intimacy with Alypius[41] and Nebridius.[42] Alypius was from the same town in which I had been born; his parents were leading citizens, and he was somewhat younger than I. In fact, he had been one of my students when I began to teach in my home town and, later on, in Carthage. He had a deep affection for me because I seemed good and learned to him, and I loved him because of his great talent for virtue. But the vortex of Carthaginian customs, with its seething whirl of frivolous shows, had engulfed him in a mad passion for the circus games. While he was unhappily swirling about in this, I was conducting a public school there, as a teacher of rhetoric. He was not yet studying under me because of some disagreement which had come up between his father and myself. I had found out that he had developed a fatal fascination for the circus, and I became seriously disturbed at the thought that such great promise should be lost or that it might already be lost. But, there was no opportunity to warn him or to recall him by any kind of coercion, on the basis either of friendly kindness or of academic authority. For, I was of the opinion that he shared his father's sentiments toward me, though actually he did not. So, disregarding his father's wishes in the matter, he began to greet me, coming into my classroom and listening a little and then leaving.

41 A life-long friend of Augustine (*'fratrem cordis mei,'* below, 9.4.7), Alypius was converted with him (below 7.8.19-12.30), participated intelligently in the discussions at Cassiciacum (9.3.5), became bishop of their home town (Tagaste) in 394-5, and assisted Augustine in his controversies with heretics and in numerous Church Councils. He appears to have outlived Augustine. Cf. P. Monceaux, *Hist. lit. de l'Afrique Chrét.* 7.54-58.

42 Cf. above, 4 n. 27. This young man was also a good friend of Augustine for many years (6.10.17); he did not become a priest, but returned to Africa to manage his family estate. Baptized shortly after Augustine, Nebridius had died by the time Augustine was writing the *Confessions* (9.3.6.)

(12) But, it had slipped from my mind to do something about him, so that such a good talent would not be ruined by a blind and headlong fascination for these idle games. In truth, however, Thou, O Lord, who dost preside at the helm[43] of all things which Thou hast created, hadst not forgotten that he was to become a minister of Thy sacrament amongst Thy children and, in order that his reformation might be openly attributed to Thee, Thou didst work it through me, but I was not aware of it.

For, one day, while I was sitting in my accustomed place and my students were assembled before me, he came in, greeted me, sat down, and turned his attention to what was being done. By chance, there was at hand a text to be read. While I was giving my exposition, an example from the circus games occurred to me as suitable for use, that my meaning might be made more pleasing and clear by a biting and derisive reference to those whom this foolishness had enslaved. Thou, our God, knowest[44] that I had no thought at the time of curing Alypius of that pestilence. But, he took it to himself and thought that I had said it only for his benefit. What another man would have taken as a reason for anger against me, this upright young man took as a basis for anger against himself, and for an increase in the ardor of his affection for me.

Thou hadst already said it long ago and hadst incorporated it in Thy Scripture: 'Rebuke a wise man and he will love thee.'[45] But, I had not rebuked him. Rather, Thou, using all beings, knowing and ignorant, in the order of Thy knowledge (and that order is just), didst produce glowing coals[46] from my heart and tongue by which Thou mightest cauterize the

43 The imagery of God, 'sitting at the helm of the world,' is, strangely enough, from Plato, *Politicus* 273D.

44 Cf. Ps. 68.6.

45 Prov. 9.8.

46 Cf. Rom. 12.20 (which is a quotation from Prov. 25.21-22); Ezech. 1.13.

decay in a mind of such good promise and heal it. Let him be silent in Thy praise who does not dwell upon Thy mercies, which confess unto Thee[47] from the marrow of my bones.

As a matter of fact, after hearing these words, he threw himself up from that deep ditch in which he had been so willingly submerged and blinded with its strange pleasure. He shook his mind free with strengthened temperance, and all the filth of the circus games flew off him.[48] He went there no more. Then, he convinced his reluctant father that he should come to my school. The man yielded and gave his permission.

When he began to attend my classes again, he became enmeshed with me in that superstition,[49] being attracted by the show of continence on the part of the Manichaeans, for he thought it was true and genuine. However, it was nonsensical and misleading, captivating priceless souls who did not know enough, as yet, to touch the peak of virtue and who were easily deceived by the superficiality of shadowy and simulated virtue.[50]

Chapter 8

(13) Being quite unwilling to give up the worldly path which had been made to appear attractive to him by the constant efforts of his parents, he had gone on ahead of me to Rome to study law. There, he was unbelievably carried away by an incredible fascination for the performances of the gladiators.

When he would have turned away from such things in

---

47 Cf. Ps. 106.8.

48 Augustine seems to be thinking of something like a dog jumping out of a puddle of dirty water and shaking himself clean.

49 Faustus is an example of this Manichaean tendency; he claimed that he practised all the beatitudes. (*Contra Faust.* 5.1).

50 The treatise, *De moribus Manichaeorum*, is Augustine's criticism of the pseudo-asceticism of some of the Manichaeans.

comtempt, some of his friends and fellow students, while they were on their way home from a dinner, dragged him with friendly force, against his strong objections and resistance, into the amphitheatre during a period when there were performances of those cruel and murderous sports. He kept saying these words: 'If you drag in my body and put it in that place, do you think you can make my mind and my eyes pay attention to those spectacles? I shall be absent though present and in that way I shall overcome both you and them.' Undeterred at hearing these words, they brought him in with them, probably wanting to find out whether he could do just that.

When they got in and had taken their places in such seats as were available, the whole place was boiling with the most savage passions. With his eyelids tightly closed, he forbade his mind to go out to such wicked things. Would that he had been able to stop up his ears, too! For, when one man fell in the fight and an immense roar from the whole audience struck his ears with a violent shock, he was overcome by curiosity. Convined that, whatever it was like, he could defy and overcome it, even when looking at it, he opened his eyes and was wounded more seriously in his soul than the gladiator, whom he lusted to observe, had been wounded in the body. Thus, he fell more wretchedly than that man whose fall had caused the uproar which entered through his ears and laid bare his eyes[51] so that the means was provided by which his daring mind could be wounded and knocked down—daring rather than strong, and all the weaker for having depended on itself,[52] when it should have depended on Thee. As he looked upon the blood, he drank in the savagery at the same time.

51 In Augustine's physiology of corporeal vision, the eyes are pictured as having a light of their own, which they send forth to the visible object. Cf. *De Gen. ad litt.* 4.34.54; 12.16.23; *De Trin.* 9.3.3.

52 *quo de se praesumserat*: cf. Judith 6.15: *'praesumentes de se.'*

He did not turn away his gaze, but fixed it and unconsciously imbibed the mad passions. He enjoyed the criminal contest, and became drunk with lust for bloodshed. He was no longer the man who had come in, but a member of the mob to which he had come, a true associate of those who had brought him in. What more? He watched; he shouted; he rose to fever heat; he took away with him a mad passion which prodded him not only to return with those by whom he had first been forced in, but even ahead of them and dragging in others.

Nevertheless, Thou, with a most powerful and merciful hand, didst pull him out of it and teach him not to place his trust in himself but in Thee.[53] But that was long afterwards.

Chapter 9

(14) But, of course, this was stored in his memory as a remedy for the future. So, too, was the following incident. While he was still a pupil of mine in Carthage, he was occupied one noonday in the market place with thoughts about a coming recitation, as students are accustomed to go over their lessons, and Thou didst permit him to be seized as a thief by the caretakers of the market place. I believe Thou didst permit it for no other reason, O my God, than so that this man destined to such a future should even then begin to learn that, in the judging of cases,[54] a man should not readily be condemned with rash credulity by another man.

He was walking along by himself with his tablets and stylus, in front of the seat of justice, when the actual thief, a young man who was one of the students, came along carrying a concealed hatchet. Though Alypius was unaware of it, the

53 Cf. Isa. 57. 13.
54 Later, as a bishop, Alypius served as a judge for his diocese of Tagaste.

young student went in to the lead gratings which cover the bankers' stalls and began to hack off the lead.[55] Of course, when they heard the noise of the hatchet, the money-changers who were inside spoke in whispers and sent out some men to catch whomever they might chance to find. When he heard their voices, he dropped the tool and left the place, fearing that they would catch him with it. But Alypius, who had not seen him go in, noticed him coming out and he saw that he was running away quickly. So, being curious to know the reason, Alypius went into the place, found the hatchet, and stood there inspecting it in amazement. At that point, along came the men who had been sent out; they found him alone and in his hands the iron tool[56] which had made the noise that had caused them to come. They caught him and dragged him away, boasting before the crowd of people who lived along the forum that they had taken a thief red-handed. Then, he was led away to be turned over to the judges.

(15) But, his lesson was to stop here. Thou, O Lord, didst immediately come to the aid of his innocence, of which Thou wert the sole witness. As he was being led off to prison or punishment, a certain architect met them. He was the chief superintendent of public buildings. They were quite pleased at encountering him of all people, for, in his eyes, they were usually suspected of taking the things which disappeared from the market place, and now at last it seemed that he would know the perpetrator of these deeds.

However, this man had often seen Alypius in the home of

---

55 Along one side of the open square in Carthage, a sunken street ran; stairs went up from it to the level of the forum. (Cf. De Labriolle, *Conf.* 1.132, citing a Paris dissertation of 1901; A. Audollent, *Carthage Romaine* 228-230.) Lead work of some kind (De Labriolle thinks 'balustrades' and Gibb-Montgomery conjecture 'leaden gratings') adorned the tops of the stalls of the money-changers, or possibly silversmiths.

56 *ferentem ferrum*: literally, 'carrying the iron.'

a certain senator,[57] where he was a frequent visitor. Recognizing him at once and grasping his hand, he took him aside from the mob and asked the reason for such an unfortunate situation. He heard what had occurred, and he ordered all the men present, who were continuing to shout and mutter in a threatening way, to come with him. So, they came to the home of the youth who had done the deed. There was a slave boy in front of the door, so small as to be able to tell the whole story readily with no fear of the consequences to his master; in fact, he had followed him into the market place. After Alypius remembered him, he indicated the fact to the architect. Moreover, the latter showed the hatchet to the boy and asked him whose it was. Without hesitation, he said: 'Ours.' On being questioned further, he revealed the rest of the story.

Thus, the accusation was transferred to that house, to the consternation of the mob, for they had already started to celebrate their victory over Alypius. He who was to be a minister of Thy Word and the judge of many trials in Thy Church went away a more experienced and a better informed man.

Chapter 10

(16) And so, I had discovered him in Rome. He clung to me with the greatest attachment and proceeded to Milan with me, so that he would not be away from me, and so that he might do something about the practice of law, which he had studied in accord with the wishes of his parents, rather than his own. He had now served three times as judicial

57 A senator in the Roman provinces was merely a locally important man; Cf. S. Dill, *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Roman Empire* (London 1899) 207.

assessor,[58] amazing his associate with his probity, while he was amazed at those men who set gold above honesty. His character had also been tested, not only by the allurements of cupidity, but even by the goad of fear. At Rome, he served as assessor to the count who had charge of the finances for Italy. At that time, there was a certain very powerful senator to whom many men were obligated because of benefactions and many were under his control out of terror. He wished to gain some special privilege for himself, as is customary with a man possessing his influence, and it was something that was illegal before the law. Alypius opposed it. A bribe was offered; he rebuffed it with spirit. Threats were made; he spurned them roughly. All were amazed at such unaccustomed spirit, which did not crave such a man as a friend, or fear him as an enemy, even though he was much noted for his innumerable ways of giving help or doing harm. But the judge himself, whom he served as counselor, though he, too, was unwilling to permit it, did not refuse openly, however. Instead, placing the burden of the case on this man [Alypius], he maintained that the assessor would not give permission, and, as a matter of fact, if he had done it, Alypius would have resigned.

By one thing only was he ever tempted to do wrong, and that was because of his interest in literary studies. He considered having books copied for his own use at the reduced rates given a public official,[59] but, basing his decision on justice, he changed his reasoning for the better, and decided that equity, by which it was forbidden, had greater force than his authority, by which it was allowed. This is a small

---

58 A judicial assessor was a lawyer who served as adviser to a Roman magistrate; the latter was not necessarily a legal expert. Cf. Cicero, *De orat.* 1.37.

59 *pretiis praetorianis*: may possibly mean (Forcellini *Tot. Lat. Lex.*) official fees; however, with that meaning, there would be no moral problem involved.

matter, but 'he who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much.'[60] This statement coming from the mouth of Thy Truth is by no means vain: 'If in the case of the wicked mammon you have not proved faithful, who will entrust to you what it true? And if in the case of what belongs to another you have not proved faithful, who will give you what is our own?'[61]

Such was the man who was so closely attached to me then, and wavered, as I did, in trying to determine what manner of life was to be embraced.

(17) Nebridius, too, leaving his home district near Carthage, leaving Carthage itself where he spent most of his time, leaving behind a very fine family estate in the country, leaving his home and mother who would not follow him, had come to Milan for no other reason than to live with me in the most enthusiastic pursuit of truth and wisdom. As an ardent seeker for the happy life and a most acute examiner of the most difficult problems, he matched me in his aspirations and also in his fluctuations. So, there were the mouths of three needy people, breathlessly admitting their individual needs to each other and waiting for Thee to give them food in due season.[62] In all the bitterness which, by Thy mercy, was a consequence of our worldly actions, as we kept our gaze upon the end, asking why we should suffer such things, darkness intervened. We were turned away groaning and saying: 'How long must this continue?' We said this frequently, yet, in saying it, we did not abandon our ways of living, for nothing shone with the light of certainty which we might have grasped had we left these things behind.

60 Luke 16.10.
61 Luke 16.11-12.
62 Cf. Ps. 144.15.

Chapter 11

(18) I experienced the greatest wonder when I anxiously reflected on what a long time it was from my nineteenth year,[63] at which time I had begun to be passionately interested in the pursuit of wisdom, deciding that I would leave behind all the empty aspirations and the foolish deceptions connected with vain desires when it was found. And here I was, now, in my thirtieth year, stuck in the same mire by my craving to enjoy the things of the present which eluded me and wasted my energy, while I kept saying: 'Tomorrow I shall find it; look, it will appear as an evident thing and I shall hold it; see, Faustus will come and explain everything. O, you great men of the Academy! Nothing pertaining to the direction of life can be apprehended with certitude. Rather, let us seek more carefully and not give up in despair. See, now the things which used to appear absurd in the ecclesiastical books are not absurd; they can be understood in another and quite suitable way. I shall place my feet on that same step on which I was placed as a boy by my parents, until the plain truth is discovered. But, where may it be sought? When may it be sought? Ambrose has no free time. There is no time to read. Where can we look for the books themselves? From what source and when can we get them? From whom can we borrow? A time schedule must be made, allotting the hours for the welfare of the soul. Up comes a great hope: the Catholic faith does not teach the things we thought it did, and we were without basis in condemning it. Its learned men consider it an impiety to believe that God is limited by the shape of the human body. Do we hesitate about knocking[64] so that the rest may be opened up? In the

63 Note that this begins a resumé of Augustine's mental and moral vicissitudes over a ten-year period.
64 Cf. Matt. 7.7.

morning hours the students keep us busy; what do we do the rest of the time? Why do we not attend to this? But, when will we greet our important friends whose help we need? When can we prepare what we sell to the pupils? When can we find recreation for ourselves and mental relaxation from the strain of our troubles?

(19) 'Perish all these things! Let us put aside these vain frivolities. Let us apply ourselves solely to the search for truth. Life is unhappy, death is uncertain; were it to snatch us suddenly, in what condition would we be to leave this state? And where are those things, which we have neglected here, to be learned by us? Rather, is not some punishment to be exacted for this negligence? What if death itself cuts off and finishes all concern, along with sense perception? So, this is another question to be studied.

'But, away with the notion that things are like that. It is not an idle or an empty thing that the crest of the authority of the Christian faith is spread so high throughout the whole world.[65] Such great and remarkable things would never have been done for us by divine agency, if, with the death of the body, the life of the soul were also to be finished. So, why should we delay in leaving behind worldly hope and applying ourselves completely to the search for God and the happy life?

'But wait! These earthly things are also pleasurable; they possess no little sweetness of their own. My interest in them should not be cut off lightly, for it would be a shameful thing to return to them another time. See, now, quite a good deal has been done to obtain a position of preferment. What more is to be desired in these things? There is a sufficiency of important friends; not to seek after something too great, a

65 On the spread of the Catholic faith in the world, cf. *De fide rer. quae non vid.* 5-7.

governorship surely may be granted.[66] I could marry a wife with some wealth, so that living expenses would not be made heavier, and that would be the limit of desire. Many great men, well worthy of emulation, have been dedicated to the pursuit of wisdom in the married life.'

(20) While I was saying these things and while the winds shifted, blowing my heart now one way and now another, time passed by. I was delaying my conversion[67] to the Lord. From day to day I put off living in Thee, but I did not put off my daily death within my very self. Though I loved the happy life, I feared it in its own Seat;[68] I sought it while actually fleeing from it. I was of the opinion that I should be very unhappy if I were deprived of feminine embraces.[69] I did not think of the remedy of Thy mercy as a cure for this same weakness, for I had no experience with it. I believed that continence is a result of one's own powers, and I was not aware of having such power, since I was so stupid that I ignored the fact that, as has been written:[70] No one can be continent unless Thou dost grant it. Thou wouldst surely have granted it, if I had knocked at Thy ears with interior groaning and if I had cast my care upon Thee with a firm faith.

Chapter 12

(21) As a matter of fact, Alypius prevented me from taking a wife by saying repeatedly that, if I did so, we would be absolutely unable to live, in undisturbed leisure, together in the love of wisdom, as we had long desired. He was in this

66 Augustine speaks vaguely of his ambition to become some sort of judge, or a governor of a province; cf. *De beata vita* 4.
67 Cf. Eccli. 5.8.
68 *In sede sua*: i.e., in God.
69 Cf. *De beata vita* 1.4; *De util. cred.* 3.
70 Cf. Wisd. 8.21.

matter, even at that time, most chaste, so far so, indeed, as to be a cause for wonder; for in his early youth he had some sexual experience, but he did not continue to; rather, he regretted and scorned it and, from that time on, lived most continently.

In opposing his attitude, I used the examples of those men who were married and had cultivated wisdom, gaining merit before God and remaining faithful and loving to their friends. Indeed, I was far removed from their grandeur of soul; being tied down by the disease of the flesh, I dragged my chain with deadly delight, dreading to be set free. Yet, as if the sore had been struck, I rebuffed these words of good counsel, as if they had been the hand of one releasing the chain. Moreover, the serpent[71] spoke also to Alypius himself, through me, weaving and setting out sweet snares in his path by means of my tongue, by which his upright and unentangled feet might be caught.

(22) For he wondered why I, on whom he set no small value, was so mired in the gum of this sense pleasure that I claimed, every time we discussed the question among ourselves, that it was quite impossible for me to live a celibate life. When I saw that he was astonished, I found a way to defend myself by saying that there was a great difference between his stolen and furtive experiences, which he could hardly remember now and which he therefore found it easy to scorn without annoyance, and my customary enjoyments. If these latter were given the virtuous name of matrimony, he would have no need to wonder why I could not scorn that life. So, he, too, began to desire marriage, not at all overcome by the lust for such sense pleasure, but out of curiosity. He said that he wanted to know what this thing was, without which my life, so pleasing to him, seemed to me to be no life but a punishment. Being free from that chain, his mind was

71 Gen. 3.1.

amazed at my slavery and in his amazement he advanced to a feeling of desire that he might have the same experience for himself. From that point, he might, perchance, have fallen into that servitude which he had viewed with such amazement, since he wanted to make a pact with death[72] and 'he who loves danger shall perish in it.'[73]

Whatever conjugal grace there be in the duty of regulating the married state and in the bringing up of children, this moved the two of us but vaguely. As for me, what in large part occasioned the vehement torment of my captivity was the custom of satisfying an insatiable concupiscence; it was a wondering curiosity, on the other hand, that led him on toward captivity. Thus we were, until Thou, O Most Exalted, not abandoning our slime, commiserating us in our misery, didst come to our assistance in wondrous and hidden ways.

Chapter 13

(23) I was unceasingly urged to take a wife. I had already proposed marriage and was now engaged, chiefly through the efforts of my mother, for, once married, the saving waters of baptism might cleanse me. She was gladdened that I grew daily more adjusted to this goal and she noticed that her prayers and Thy promises were being fulfilled in regard to my faith.

Of course, when at my request and because of her own desire, she prayerfully begged Thee daily, with the vehement cries of her heart, to show her something in a vision about my future marriage, Thou never wouldst. She did see some vain and fanciful things, under the compulsion of the human spirit dwelling upon the matter, and she told me about it, but

72 Cf. Wisd. 1.16.
73 Eccli. 3.27.

without the confidence she usually had when Thou didst show something to her; rather, with contempt for this vision. For, she said that she could distinguish by means of some sort of savor, which she could not explain in words, the difference between Thy revelation and the dreaming of her own soul.

The matter was kept going, however. A girl was spoken for who was almost two years younger than the age suitable for marriage; since she was pleasing, we waited.[74]

Chapter 14

(24) Many of us who were friends, detesting the tumultuous annoyances of human life, had by now, through thinking on the matter and joint discussion, almost decided to live in a quiet way removed from crowds. To secure this peaceful life, we planned to put together whatever possessions we had and to set up one household out of all, so that, as a result of true friendship, nothing would belong to one person rather than to another. Instead, one fund would be made of all our possessions, and the whole thing would belong to each person singly, and everything to all. There seemed to be about ten of us who could join in this society. Some among us were richer, particularly Romanianus,[75] our fellow townsman, the serious condition of whose business had brought to the court. I had known him quite closely from my earliest years. He was the chief advocate of this plan and he had a good deal of weight in speaking for it, because his considerable possessions were much larger than those of the other men.

74 Girls were permitted to marry at the age of twelve (Justinian, *Institutiones* 1.10.22); this girl must have been rather young. She and Augustine were never married, of course.

75 Romanianus did not join the group when they went, later, to Cassiciacum. His son, Licentius, did. It is possible that Romanianus was converted from Manichaeism to Christianity, however. Cf. *Epist.* 27.5; *Contra Acad.* 1.1.3.

We had planned that two men each year would take charge, like magistrates, of all necessary things, leaving the others free from care. But, afterwards, the problem arose whether the wives which some of our members already had, and which we wished to have, would allow this. The whole plan which we had so well formulated went to pieces in our hands; it was broken up and cast aside.

Thence once again to our sighs and groaning, our footsteps again to follow the wide and worn ways[76] of the world, for, though many things may be thought within our hearts,[77] Thy counsel endures into eternity. From Thy counsel, Thou didst laugh at our plan and make ready Thine own, whereby Thou wouldst give us meat in due season and open Thy hand and fill our souls with blessing.[78]

Chapter 15

(25) In the meantime, my sins were multiplied. When the woman[79] with whom I had lived for so long was torn from my side because she was a hindrance to my marriage, my heart, to which she clung, was cut and wounded, and the wound drew blood. She returned to Africa, vowing unto Thee that she would never know another man and leaving with me the natural son[80] whose mother she was.

But I, unfortunate, unable even to emulate a woman and impatient at the delay attendant upon waiting two years for

76 Cf. Matt. 7.13.
77 Cf. Prov. 19.21.
78 Cf. Ps. 144.15-16.
79 The mother of Adeodatus appears to have been of such a social level that Augustine did not consider marrying her. It is evident that Monica did not care for her. Augustine has been criticized for his treatment of the woman, but we do not know the circumstances well enough to make a judgment.
80 Adeodatus.

the girl to whom I had proposed, because I was not a lover of marriage but a slave of lust, procured another woman—but not as a wife. Thus, it was as if the whole, or an increased, illness of my soul were sustained and continued, under the escort of a persisting custom, into the very realm of matrimony. Nor was that wound of mine healed, which had been made by cutting off the first woman; rather, after the fever and most severe pain, it began to fester, and, though the pain seemed cooler, it was more desperate.

Chapter 16

(26) Praise to Thee, glory to Thee, O Fount of Mercies! As I grew more unhappy, Thou didst come nearer. Thy right hand was ever ready to pluck me from the filth[81] and cleanse me, but I did not know it. Nor did anything recall me from the deeper abyss of carnal pleasures, except the fear of death and of Thy future judgment, which, despite the vagaries of my opinions, never departed from my breast.

I continued to argue with my friends, Alypius and Nebridius, on the ultimate goods and evils, that Epicurus[82] would have won the day in my mind, except for the fact that I believed that the life of the soul remained after death and was treated according to its merits, which Epicurus refused to believe. If we were immortal—I used to ask—and if we lived on in the perpetual enjoyment of bodily pleasures without any fear of loss, why would we not be happy or what else might we seek? I did not know that intrinsic to my great unhappiness

81 Cf. Ps. 39.3.

82 The Epicurean philosophy was still important in Augustine's day. It was best known in Latin literature through Lucretius, *De rerum natura,* one of the greatest philosophic poems. The Epicurean school was materialistic, did not accept the notion of personal immortality, and opposed the established pagan religion. Cf. *Enarr. in ps.* 73.25.

was the very fact that I was sunk so low and was so blind that I could not think of the light of virtue and of beauty embraced for its own sake, which the eye of the flesh does not see and which is seen from within. Nor did I, unhappy man, consider from what source sprang the pleasure I had in discussing these very things, foul though they were, with my friends. Without friends, even the happiness of the senses which I then possessed was impossible, no matter how great the abundance of carnal pleasures. Of course, I loved these friends for their own sakes and I felt that I was loved in return by them for my own sake.

O crooked ways! Woe to my rash soul,[83] which has hoped that by departing from Thee it will obtain something better! It turns and turns again—on its back, on its side, and on its stomach—yet it finds all things hard, and that Thou alone art rest. And, behold, Thou art at hand; Thou dost free us from our wretched errors and set us straight on Thy way,[84] and dost console us as Thou sayest: 'Run, I shall bear you up and bring you to the end, and even there shall I bear you.'[85]

83 Cf. Isa. 3.9.
84 Cf. Ps. 31.8.
85 Cf. Isa. 46.4.

BOOK SEVEN

Chapter 1

MY EVIL AND WICKED adolescence was now dead and I was passing into manhood.[1] The more mature I grew in age, the more ugly did I grow in my vanity. For, I was unable to think of any substance except that kind which is customarily seen through these eyes. I did not think of Thee, O God, in terms of the shape of the human body, from the time that I began to hear something about wisdom (this I always avoided and it was a matter of joy for me to discover the same attitude in the faith of our spiritual mother, Thy Catholic Church), but what else I might think Thee was not evident. I strove as a man (such a man as I was) to think of Thee, the highest and only and true God.[2] I believed with my whole heart that Thou art incorruptible and inviolable and immutable, for, though ignorant of the source

1 *in juventutem*: in classical usage, the period between the twentieth and the fortieth year; this book refers to the year 385, when Augustine was thirty years old. Book 7 is an excellent introduction to the understanding of Augustine's philosophical development. For an analysis of its philosophical implications, cf. F. Cayré, *Initiation à la philosophie de saint Augustin* (Paris 1947) 153-170.

2 Cf. John 17.3.

and reason, I saw clearly and was certain that what can be corrupted is worse than that which cannot—and without hesitation I placed what cannot be violated above that which can be violated—and that a thing which suffers no change is better than that which is mutable.

My heart cried out strongly against all my phantasms,[3] and with this one blow I tried to drive away the horde of uncleanness which swarmed about the gaze of my mind. They had hardly been dispersed when, in the twinkling of an eye, they formed again into a swarm about me, rushed in before my gaze, and beclouded it, so that I was forced to think, not in terms of the shape of a human body, but of some corporeal being in local space, either spread out in the world or even infinitely diffused[4] outside the world, applying this concept even to that incorruptible, inviolable, and immutable thing which I set above the corruptible, violable, and mutable. For, whatever I deprived of such spatial definition seemed to me to be nothing, absolutely nothing, not even a void—just as if a body were taken away from a place and the place remained entirely empty of all body, whether earthly, wet, airy, and heavenly, and yet there be an empty place, like a spacious nothing.[5]

(2) Thus, in my grossness of mind[6] (for I was not even able to gain a clear view of my very self), I thought that whatever was not extended through some spatial magnitude, or spread out, or formed into a mass, or puffed out—or took, or could take, such form—must be simply nothing. For,

---

3 *phantasmata*: constructed images in the inner sense; cf. above, 3.29.

4 Readers of C. S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters,* will recognize the source of the 'tapioca' theory of God.

5 There is no evidence that Augustine read Parmenides' poem, *On the Nature of Things,* or Plato's dialogue, *Parmenides;* yet, Augustine approaches the Parmenidean concept of Being, in these early speculations. See the portions of the poem in M. C. Nahm, *Selections from Early Greek Philosophy* (New York 1935) 114-117.

6 *incrassatus corde*: cf. Matt. 13.15: 'the heart of this people has been hardened.'

of whatever sort were the forms among which my eyes were accustomed to move, such were the images among which my heart moved. I did not see that this same act of the mind, by which I formed these very images, is not of the same nature as they are. Yet, it could not form them unless it were a being of some importance.[7]

Thus, too, did I think of Thee, O Life of my life, as great throughout infinite space in all directions, penetrating the entire mass of the world and beyond it in every direction throughout unbounded magnitude; as if the earth possessed Thee, the heavens, too, and all things were bounded within Thee, but Thou wert nowhere bounded. Just as the body of the air—the air that is above the earth—does not hinder the light of the sun from passing through it and permeating it, not by breaking it up or cutting, but by filling it up completely, so I considered not only the mass of the heavens and the air and the sea, but also that of the earth, to be permeated by Thee, to be capable of being penetrated in all its greatest and smallest parts in order to receive Thy Presence, governing all things which Thou hast made by a hidden inspiration from within and from without. Thus did I conjecture, for I could not think otherwise. It was false, of course. From that point of view, a larger part of the earth would possess a greater part of Thee, and a smaller, less of Thee, and all things would be filled with Thee in such a way that the body of an elephant would take in more of Thee than that of a sparrow, because it is given to the former, as a larger thing, to occupy a greater part of place. Thus, broken into bits, Thou wouldst make the big parts of Thyself present in the big things and the small parts in the small things. But, that is not the way it is. Thou hadst not yet 'enlightened my darkness.'[8]

7 On the immateriality of the human mind cf Augustine's more mature discussion, in *De Trin.* 5.1.2.

8 Ps. 17.29.

Chapter 2

(3) It was enough for me, O Lord, in opposition to those deceived deceivers[9] and those talkative mutes (for they never gave voice to Thy Word)—that [argument], which used to be proposed by Nebridius long ago during our period at Carthage, was enough. All of us who had heard it were struck by it: What would that unknown brood of darkness, which they [the Manichaeans] used to set up with its forces massed in opposition, have done if Thou hadst refused to fight against it? For, if the answer were that some harm would have been done to Thee, then Thou wouldst be capable of violation, and corruptible.[10] However, if it were said that no harm could have resulted to Thee, then no cause could be alleged for fighting, for fighting in such a way that some part of Thee, some member of Thee, or offspring of Thy very Substance would be mixed in with the opposing powers, with natures not created with Thee, and by them be so far corrupted and changed to a worse condition as to be perverted from happiness to misery and to stand in need of help wherewith to be delivered and purified. This part was supposed to be the soul, to which servile, defiled, and corrupted being Thy 'Word,' free, pure, and uncorrupted, came in aid, yet Thy 'Word' was also corruptible, for it sprang from the same substance. Thus, if they said that Thou, whatever Thou art, that is, Thy Substance by which Thou art, art incorruptible, then all these things are false and damnable; but, if they maintained that Thou art corruptible, then that is false and hateful from the very beginning.

So, this argument was quite sufficient as a refutation of these men who deserved in every way to be vomited forth

9 Cf. 2 Tim. 3.13.

10 The same argument is used by Augustine, in *De actis cum Felice Manich.* 2.22, and Felix was, apparently, convinced by it.

from a bloated breast, for they had no means of escape that would avoid the horrible sacrilege in heart and tongue present in thinking and speaking those things about Thee.

Chapter 3

(4) Up to this time, however, though claiming and firmly believing that our Lord, the true God, Thou who hast made not only our souls but also our bodies, not merely our souls and bodies but all people and all things, art incapable of contamination and perversion, and mutable in no part, I did not grasp, clear and uncomplicated, the cause of evil.[11] Yet, whatever this might be, I saw that it must be looked for in such a way that I should not be forced to believe that the immutable God is mutable; otherwise, I might become what I was seeking.[12] So, I was safe in looking for it, and sure that their statement was not true. With my whole mind, I fled from these men, for I saw that, while searching for the source of evil, they were filled with malice[13] which enabled them to believe that Thy Substance suffers evil, rather than their own substance commits evil.

(5) I turned my attention to observe what I heard: that the free choice of the will is the cause of our committing evil, and Thy right judgment, the cause of our suffering it.[14] But,

11 *De libero arbitrio* opens with the question: 'Tell me, I beg you, is not God the Author of evil?' Augustine's answer is given there in Book 3, written about the year 395.

12 Augustine is seeking the cause of evil; to make God appear mutable is to cause evil; were he to make God appear mutable, Augustine would be seeking himself. (The force of the argument is rhetorical rather than logical.)

13 Rom. 1.29.

14 Foı the distinction between *culpa* and *poena*, cf. *Contra Adimantum Manich.* 26: 'evil is spoken of in two ways: one kind man does, the other is suffered, the former is sin [*peccatum*], the latter is punishment [*poena*].'

I was not able to see this clearly. So, I tried to lift up the gaze of my mind from the depths, but I was again bogged down; making the attempt repeatedly, I bogged down again and again. What did lift me up to Thy Light was the fact that I knew just as well that I possessed a will as that I was alive. So, whenever I wished or did not wish something, I was most certain that no other being than myself performed the act of willing or refusing. More and more, I came to observe that there lies the cause of my sin. I saw that whatever I did unwillingly was something which I suffered rather than did actively. And I judged that this was not a fault but a punishment,[15] and I quickly confessed that I was not unjustly punished thereby, for I thought of Thee as just.

But, again I said: 'Who made me? Surely it was my God, not only Good but Goodness Itself? Whence, then, my ability to wish evil and to refuse the good? That there might be a cause why I should justly suffer punishments? Who placed this in me and planted the seedlings of bitterness[16] in me, since my whole being is from my most sweet God? If the Devil is the originator, then what is the source of the Devil? If he, too, by a perverse act of will, turned from a good angel into a devil, what is the source of this bad will in him, by which he became a devil, when he was made completely an angel by the best Creator?'

I was again weighed down and suffocated by these thoughts, but I was not led down to that hell of error in which no man confesses unto Thee,[17] where it is thought that Thou dost suffer evils rather than that man commits them.

15 On the distinction of the punishment of sin (*poena peccati*) from the sin (*peccatum*), *cf. Retract.* 1.13.5.

16 Cf. Heb. 12.15.

17 Cf. Ps. 6.6.

Chapter 4

(6) Thus did I strive to find out the other things, just as I had already discovered that the incorruptible is better than the corruptible, and, as a consequence, I confessed that, whatever Thou art, Thou art incorruptible. Indeed, there never was, or will be, any soul which could think of anything which is better than Thee, who art the highest and the best Good. Since the incorruptible may be most truly and most certainly put above the corruptible, as I had already done, I now might have reached another thing in my thinking, which would be better than my God, unless Thou wert incorruptible. In that same place where I saw that the incorruptible was to be preferred to the corruptible, I ought to have sought Thee and from there observed the source of evil, that is, the source of that corruption by which Thy Substance can in no way be violated. For, of course, corruption may not violate our God in any way, by any act of will, by any necessity, by any unforeseen chance, since He is God, and whatever He wishes for Himself is good, and He Himself is the same Good; and suffering corruption is not a good. Nor art Thou unwillingly forced to anything, for Thy will is no greater than Thy power. But, it would be greater if Thou wert greater than Thyself, for the will and the power of God is God Himself. What could be unforeseen to Thee, who knowest all things? No nature exists, unless Thou dost know it. Why should we say anything more as to the reason why the Substance which in God is not corruptible, for, if it were corruptible, it would not be God?

Chapter 5

(7) I sought the source of evil and my way of searching was evil, yet I did not see the evil in my very searching. I set up before the gaze of my spirit the whole of creation, whatever we may see in it, such as the earth, the sea, the air, the stars, the trees, the mortal animals, and whatever we cannot see in it, such as the firmament of the heavens, and all the angels and the spiritual beings in it—but even these latter were somewhat like bodies; my imagination arranged them in various places. I made of Thy creation one great mass, adorned with different kinds of bodies, whether the things were in fact bodies, or whether I imagined them as such instead of spirits. I made it great, not as great as it was, for I could not know this, but as great as seemed convenient, and bounded on all sides, of course. But Thee, O Lord, I imagined embracing it in every part and penetrating it, but remaining everywhere infinite. It was like a sea, everywhere and in all directions spreading through immense space, simply an infinite sea. And it had in it a great sponge, which was finite, however, and this sponge was filled, of course, in every part with the immense sea.[18]

In this way, I conceived of Thy finite creation as finite, yet full of Thy infinity. And I said: 'Here is God, and here is what God has created. God is good and He is unquestionably and by far superior to these things. Yet, as a good Being, He created them good. And see how He surrounds and fills them. Whence, then, is evil? From what source and where did it break in here? What is its root, what its seed? Or is there none at all? Why, then, should we fear and shun what is not? Or, if our fears are groundless, then this fear itself is certainly evil, for by it one's heart is uselessly pricked and tortured; and evil is the more serious since, where

18 Cf. *Ennead.* 4.3.9.

there is nothing to fear, we fear none the less. For that reason, either the evil which we fear does exist, or the fact that we do fear it is evil. What is its source, then, for God is good and has made all these things good? He, the greater and the hightest Good has made the lesser goods; yet, both the Creator and the created things are all good. What is the source of evil? Was there some evil matter from which He made these things, forming and ordering it, but leaving something in it which He had not converted into a good thing? What would be the reason for this? Was He not powerful enough to change and transmute the whole matter so that no evil would remain, for He is all-powerful? Finally, why did He want to make anything of it; why did He not rather, by the same omnipotence, make it to be nothing at all? Or, indeed, was it able to exist against His will? Or, if it were eternal, why did He permit it to exist this way, through such an infinite spread of past time, and then consider it fitting, after so long, to make something of it? Or, if He had a sudden desire to do something, why, being omnipotent, did He not rather do this: make this not to be, and then He alone would exist, the whole Truth and the highest and infinite Good? Or, if it were not proper for Him who is good not to fashion and establish some other good thing, could He have brought into being some good matter from which He might make all things, after having removed and reduced to nothing the matter which was bad? He would not have been omnipotent if He had been unable to create something good without the assistance of that matter which He Himself had not created.'[19]

Such thoughts I turned over within my wretched breast

---

19 Cf. *De Gen. c. Manich.* 1.6.10: 'we should not be like those who believe that the Omnipotent God was unable to make something from nothing, thinking that carpenters and workmen are unable to fashion something unless they have something out of which to fashion it.

which was overburdened with the most biting concern about the fear of death and my failure to discover truth. But, within the Catholic Church, the faith of Thy Christ, our Lord and Saviour, inhered in my heart, unformed thus far in many things, and wavering away from the standard of doctrine. Yet, my mind did not depart from it but, rather, drank in more and more each day.

Chapter 6

(8) Now, too, I had cast behind the lying divinations and unholy aberrations of the numerologists. In regard to this, too, may Thy mercies confess to Thee from the innermost vital parts of my soul, O my God! For, Thou and Thou only (who else recalls us from the death of every error, except the Life which knows no death, the Wisdom which enlightens the minds that need it, yet itself needs no light, by which the world is governed down to the fluttering leaves on the trees?), Thou didst provide for my stubbornness, whereby I struggled against that acute old man, Vindicianus,[20] and that young man with the admirable soul, Nebridius. Both maintained—the former quite strongly and the latter with some hesitation, indeed—both often said that this art of foreseeing the future does not exist; that men's guesses often have some force because of chance, for, by saying many things, a good many are said which will turn out right, though those who said them knew it not, but just happened upon them by not keeping silent. So, Thou didst provide a man as my friend, a willing consultor of the numerologists, yet one who was not experienced in their writings; still, as I have said, a man who did consult the numerologists with curiosity, yet knew something which he said he had heard from his own father,

20 Cf. above, 4.3.5.

though how forceful it was for destroying belief in that art he did not know.

Now, this man, named Firminus, was educated in the liberal arts and trained in rhetoric. As a very dear friend, he consulted me concerning certain matters of business, in which his worldly ambition had puffed up, as to how the matter appeared to me according to his constellations, as they say. But I, who had already begun to swerve toward Nebridius' opinion on this matter, did not refuse to make a guess and say what occurred to me in my uncertainty. However, I added that I was now almost convinced that these things are ridiculous and useless. Then he told me that his father had been very interested in numerological books and had had a friend who was equally and at the same time a devotee of these things. They both devoted themselves with equal interest and application, and with ardent hearts, to these frivolous things, to the point of observing the instant of births and noting the position of the heavens on such occasions, even when such occurred among the dumb animals in their homes, collecting thereby experiences for their supposed art.

So, he said, he had heard from his father that, when his mother was pregnant before the birth of this same Firminus, a maidservant of this friend of his father was also equally pregnant. This could not remain unnoticed by the master, who was accustomed to observe even the pregnancies of his dogs, with most minute care. Thus it happened that they calculated the day, the hour, and the fraction of the hour by a most careful observation; one man for his wife, the other for his servant. Both women gave birth at the same time, so that the men were compelled to make the same horoscopes,[21] down to the very minute, for each child; one man for his son,

21 For further discussion of these *constellationes,* cf. *De div. quaest.* LXXXIII q. 45.2.

the other for the servant child. For, when the women began to be in labor, the men communicated with each other as to what was going on in their respective homes, and they had messengers ready to send to each other as soon as the awaited birth should be announced. That this should be instantly announced in each case was readily arranged, each man master in his own domain. Now, he said that the messengers sent out by each man met at such an equal distance from the homes that neither man was able to notice any difference in the position of the stars or in the fractions of time.

Yet, Firminus, because of the important position of his family, moved through the brighter ways of the world, increasing in wealth and exalted by honors, whereas the slave was in no way released from the yoke of his state of servitude and continued to serve his masters. This was made known by Firminus himself, who knew the slave well.

(9) When I heard this and believed it—the character of the narrator being what it was—all that reluctance of mine was resolved and fell flat. First of all I endeavored to recall Firminus himself from this curious interest. I told him that, having looked at his horoscope, in order to tell the truth I should have had to see in it that his parents were outstanding among their associates, that his family was noble in his own city, that he had been born a free man, well brought up and learned in the liberal arts. But, if this slave had consulted me on the basis of the same horoscope, for it was just as much his, in order to offer him the truth, also, I should in turn have had to see in it a most lowly family, his condition of slavery, and the other things far removed from the former case and quite different from it. It consequently followed that, in examining the same thing, I would have said different things, were I to speak the truth; yet, if I had said the same things, I would have spoken falsely. Hence, the most certain conclusion was that true

things spoken after a consideration of horoscopes are spoken not by art but by chance, while the false things do not spring from inexperience with the art but from deceptive fortune.

(10) Now, this story supplied an approach for me to ruminate on these matters within myself. Suppose one of these foolish men who make a living out of this kind of thing, and whom I now was eager to attack then and there and to ridicule and refute, were to argue in this way against me: that Firminus had told me, or his father had told him, a false story. I directed my consideration to those who are born as twins. In many cases they proceed so close one upon the other from the womb that the small time-interval (however much importance in the nature of things people may attribute to this) can hardly be grasped by human observation and cannot be registered in those symbols which the astrologers would study in order to foretell true events.

Yet, they will not be true, for a man looking at the same symbols would have had to say the same things for Esau and Jacob. But, the same events did not befall both men. Therefore, either a person would have told what is false, or, if he had told the truth, he would not have told the same things; yet, he would have been looking at the same things. Therefore, it is not by art but by chance that he would have told the true events.

Thou, O Lord, the most just Measurer of the universe, dost work by a hidden impulsion in those who seek advice and in those who give it, while they are ignorant of the fact; in such a way that, when a man seeks advice, he hears what he should hear in accord with the hidden merits of souls from the depths of Thy just judgment.[22] And let no man question this judgment: 'What is this?[23] What is the reason for this?' Let him not say it, let him not say it: for he is a man.

22 Cf. Ps. 35.7.
23 Eccli. 39.26.

Chapter 7

(11) So, Thou hadst already released me from those chains, O my Helper,[24] and I continued to seek the source of evil, but, there was no way out. However, Thou didst not permit me to be carried away, by any aberrations of thinking, from the faith, in which I believed that Thou dost exist, and that Thy Substance is incommutable, and that Thou dost take care and exercise Thy judgment over men, and that in Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, and in Thy holy Scripture which the authority of Thy Catholic Church guarantees, Thou hast established the way of human salvation unto that life which will come after this death.

Thus, with these beliefs safely and unshakeably confirmed in my mind, I kept anxiously searching for the source of evil. What torments these were from the labor pains of my heart; what groaning, O my God! And Thy ears were there, but I did not know. When I was brave and searched in silence, the silent sorrows of my soul were loud cries for Thy mercy. Thou didst know what I suffered, but no man did. For, how much of it was shared though my speaking of it to the ears of my most intimate friends? Surely, neither time nor my powers of speech were enough to convey to them the total tumult of my soul? But, the whole thing went up to Thy hearing, as I roared out in the anguish of my heart,[25] and my desire was before Thee and the light of my eyes was not with me.[26] For, it was within, while I was outside; but, it was not in any place. I, however, was looking at those things

24 Ps. 17.3.

25 Cf. Ps. 37.9.

26 Cf. Ps. 37.11. Augustine's theory of divine illumination has both the Bible and Plotinus as sources. God supplies an inner, spiritual light to man's soul to enable man to know and adhere to the immutable truth. But, at this time, Augustine's attention, his mental gaze, was turned away from this non-spatial spiritual light toward the spatial, corporeal light of the extra-mental world.

which are contained in different places. I found there no place to rest and these things did not receive me, so that I could say: 'It is enough and it is well.' Nor did they grant me permission to turn back to where it would be satisfactory and well. For, I was superior to these things, though inferior to Thee. Thou art my true Joy when I am subject to Thee, and Thou hast made the things which Thou hast created below me to be subject to me. This was the right arrangement, the middle level for my salvation, that I should remain in keeping with Thy image and that, in serving Thee, I should rule over the body.[27]

But, when I rose up in my pride against Thee, and ran against the Lord, with my thick neck[28] for my shield, even these lowest things were put above me and they pressed me down. At no time was there a chance to rest or to breathe. These things impinged upon my vision from all sides, in huge, thick masses. As I thought, these images of bodies set themselves in opposition to my turning back, as if to say: 'Where are you going, unworthy and defiled man?'

These things had grown from my wound, for Thou dost humble the proud man like one who is wounded.[29] I was removed from Thee by my swelling pride, and my excessively bloated face beclouded my eyes.

---

27 Implicit in this passage is Augustine's theory of the three levels of reality: God at the top (wholly immutable); the human soul in the middle (immutable in space, mutable in time); bodily things at the bottom (mutable in both ways); cf. Bourke *Augustine's Quest. of Wisdom* 225-227; *De Trin.* 10.5.7. For the Plotinian background of this theory of the 'middle region' of the soul, cf. *Ennead.* 4.8.7.

28 Cf. Job 15.26 (Old Lat. version).

29 Ps. 88.11.

Chapter 8

(12) Thou, indeed, O Lord, dost dwell in eternity, yet Thou dost not stay angry at us eternally, for Thou hast been compassionate to earth and ashes.[30] It was pleasing in Thy sight to reform my deformities. Thou didst move me with interior pricks,[31] so that I was impatient until Thou wert evident to me in my inner vision. My swollen pride grew smaller under the hidden hand of Thy remedy,[32] and the disturbed and darkened gaze of my mind grew healthier each day under the stinging salve[33] of salutary sorrows.

Chapter 9

(13) First of all, desiring to show me how Thou resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble (and by what great mercy of Thine the way of humility was shown unto men in the fact that Thy Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst men), Thou didst provide for me, by means of a man[34] who was puffed up with the most monstrous pride,

30 Cf. Ps. 84.6; 102.9; Eccli. 17.31.

31 The terminology seems related to *Aeneid,* 11.336.337: *stimulisque agitabat amaris.*

32 The 'remedy' is divine grace.

33 Cf. Apoc. 3.18.

34 The identity of this 'proud man' is not established. It is not M. Victorinus, a translator. One might suggest Porphyry (*c.* 233-301), who edited the *Enneads.* He is assailed by Augustine (*De civ. Dei* 10.26-32) for having been too proud to accept the teachings of Christ and for having run counter to the essence of Platonism in reviving polytheistic paganism. Another possibility is Manlius Theodorus, a Platonist contemporary of Augustine. Cf. *De beata vita* 1.1 and *Retract.* 1.2.

certain books of the Platonists[35] which were translated from the Greek tongue into Latin.

And therein I read, not, indeed, in these very words, but quite the same thing, supported by means of many and manifold reasons, that:

'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God:

He was in the beginning with God;

All things were made through Him and without Him was made nothing.

That which was made, in Him was life, and the life was the light of men;

And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness grasped it not.'[36]

And [I also read] that the soul of man, though it gives testimony of the light, is not itself the light,[37] but the Word, God Himself, is the 'true light, that enlightens every man

35 While there has been much difference of opinion as to the works which Augustine here calls *quosdam Platonicorum libros,* most authorities are now agreed that he read some treatises from the *Enneads of Plotinus,* translated into Latin by M. Victorinus. *De beata vita* 1.4 mentions *'Platonis paucissimis libris,'* but five Mss. have *'Plotini'* for *'Platonis'* and the Plotinus reading is adopted in the critical (*CSEL*) edition. Cf. Cayré *Initiation* 76-83; P. Henry, *La vision d'Ostie* (Paris 1938); J. Barion, *Plotin und Augustinus* (Berlin 1935); Sister M. Patricia Garvey, *St. Augustine: Christian or Neoplatonist* (Milwaukee 1939), which relies considerably on C. Boyer, *Christianisme et néoplatonisme dans la formation de s. Augustin* (Paris 1920).

36 John 1.1-5; on the punctuation of these famous first lines of the Prologue to St. John's Gospel, Cf. *De doct. Christ.* 3.2.3 (trans. J. J. Gavigan in this series).

37 Cf. *De civ. Dei,* 10.2, for an expansion of the view that the soul is not its own light. Plotinus often uses the light metaphor, but, unlike Augustine, Plotinus thinks the soul is its own light (*Ennead.* 5.3.8; the passage is well translated in: G. Clark, *Selections from Hellenistic Philosophy* [New York 1940] 249).

who comes into this world'; and that 'He was in this world, and the world was made through Him, and the world knew Him not.' But, that 'He came unto His own and His own received Him not, but to as many as received Him, He gave the power of becoming sons of God, to those who believed in His name'[38]—I did not read that there.

(14) Again, I read there that the Word, God, 'was born not of the flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God.' But, that 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us'[39]—I did not read that there.

Indeed, I did discover in these writings, expressed differently and in many ways, that, though the 'Son was in the Form of the Father, He did not consider it a usurpation to be equal to God,' since He is that by nature. But, that 'He emptied Himself, taking the nature of a slave and being made like unto man, and appearing in the form of man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to death, even to death on the Cross: therefore God also has exalted Him' from the dead 'and has bestowed upon Him the name that is above every name, so that in the name of Jesus every knee should bend of those in Heaven, on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus is in the glory of God the Father'[40]—these books do not have this.

And, that Thine Only-begotten Son immutably dwells before all times and above all times, co-eternal with Thee, and that from His fullness souls receive, so that they may be blessed, and that by a participation in the wisdom dwelling in herself they are renewed,[41] so that They may be wise—

---

38 John 1.3-12.
39 John 1.13-14.
40 Phil. 2.6-11; the American Catholic revised English version (1941) has: 'did not consider being equal to God a thing to be clung to . . .' Apparently, the last six words translate *rapinam*; I have used 'usurpation'; cf. footnote to revised version.
41 Cf. Wisd. 7.27.

that is there. But, that 'in due time He died for the ungodly' and 'that Thou didst not spare Thine Only-begotten Son, but didst deliver Him up for us all'[42]—that is not there.

For, 'Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and hast revealed them to little ones,'[43] so that they might come to Him, those 'who labor and are burdened, and that He might refresh them, for He is meek and humble of heart.' The meek He directs in judgment, and the gentle He teaches in His ways, beholding our lowliness and our trouble and forgiving all our sins.[44] But, those men who are exalted by the grandiose pretension of a doctrine they hold more sublime do not hear Him saying: 'Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls,'[45] and 'though they know God, they do not glorify Him as God or give thanks, but become vain in their reasonings, and their senseless minds have been darkened; for while professing to be wise, they become fools.'[46]

(15) I therefore read there that the glory of Thy incorruption has been transferred to idols and diverse images, into the likeness of the images of a corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things—that is to say, into the Egyptian food[47] by which Esau lost his birthright, since the first-born people gave honor to the head of a beast in place of Thee, having turned, in their hearts,

42 Rom. 5.6; 8.32.
43 Cf. Matt. 11.25ff.
44 Cf. Ps. 24.9,18.
45 Matt. 11.29.
46 Rom. 1.21,22.
47 Cf. *De doct. Christ.* 2.40.60-61 (trans. Gavigan, pp. 112-114). On the meaning of the passage, cf. E. Gilson, 'Egypte ou Grèce,' *Mediaeval Studies* 8 (1946) 43-52. Gilson concludes that Porphyry, *De abstinentia ab esu animalium,* 3.16 (ed. Hercher [Paris 1858] 56-57), is the passage to which Augustine has reference. As Gibb-Montgomery note (*Conf.*, p. 183.13), this Porphyrian source has been noted by F. Wörter, *Die Geistesentwickelung des hl. Augustinus* (Paderborn 1892).

back to Egypt,[48] and bowing Thy image, their soul, before the image of a calf eating hay.

I found these things there, but I did not partake of them. For, it pleased Thee, O Lord, to remove from Jacob the reproach of his minority, in order that the older might serve the younger, and Thou didst call heathens unto Thy inheritance.[49] I myself had come to Thee from heathens and I set my mind upon the gold which Thou hast desired Thy people to take away from Egypt, since it was Thine, wherever it was. Thou hast said to the citizens of Athens, through Thy Apostle [Paul], that in Thee we live and move and have our being, as some of them[50] have also said; in fact, these books came from there. I did not pay any attention to the idols of the Egyptians, to which they made offerings from Thy gold, changing the truth of God into a lie and worshiping and serving the creature rather than the Creator.[51]

Chapter 10

(16) Thus[52] admonished to return unto myself, I entered into my innermost parts under Thy guidance. I was able, because Thou didst become my helper. I entered in and saw with the eye of my soul (whatever its condition) the Immutable Light, above this same eye of my soul,[53] and above my mind—not this common light which is visible to all flesh, nor was it a brighter light of somewhat the same kind, as

---

48 Acts 7.39.
49 Cf. Gen. 30.23; 25.23; Rom. 9.12; Ps. 78.1.
50 Cf. F. Chatillon, '*Quidam secundum eos*,' *Revue du moyen âge latin* 1 (1945) 287-295. The same writer comments effectively on these two sections (7.15-16) in '*Regio dissimilitudinis*,' *Mélanges Podechard* (Lyon 1945) 89-96.
51 Cf. Rom. 1.25.
52 Cf. the analysis of Chs. 10-17 nn. 16-23 in Cayré, *Initiation* 156-158.
53 Cf. *Ennead.* 1.6.9.

if it were one which shines much more clearly and fills the whole of space with its magnitude. It was not this, but something different, quite different from all these. Nor was it above my mind in the way that oil is above water, nor as the heavens are above the earth, but superior in the sense that it has made me, and I was inferior in the sense that I was made by it. He who knows the truth knows it, and he who knows it knows eternity. Charity knows it.

O eternal Verity, and veritable Charity, and charitable Eternity! Thou art my God; for Thee I sigh, day and night. When I first knew Thee, Thou didst take me up to Thee, so that I might see that there was something to see, but that I was not yet ready for the vision. Shining Thy light upon me so strongly, Thou didst strike down my feeble gaze, and I trembled with love and with awe. I discovered that I was far from Thee in the area of unlikeness, as if I heard Thy voice from on high: 'I am the Food of the great: grow great and thou shalt eat of me. Nor wilt thou change Me into thee, as is done with the food of thy flesh, rather wilt thou change into Me.'

I recognized that 'Thou hast corrected man for iniquity and Thou didst make my soul shrivel up like a spider web.'[54] So I said: 'Is truth nothing, because it is spread neither in the finite, nor in the infinite parts of space?' And Thou didst cry out from afar: 'Yea, verily, I AM WHO AM!'[55]

I heard it, as one hears something in his heart. There was no reason for me to doubt. I could more easily have doubted that I was alive than that there is no truth, 'which is clearly seen being understood through the things that are made.'[56]

---

54 Jer. 31.15.

55 Exod. 3.14; *'immo vero'* is lacking in the Sessorianus Ms., but is found in ten other Mss.

56 Rom. 1.20.

Chapter 11

(17) I looked closely at the rest of things below Thee and saw that they are neither wholly in existence, nor wholly out of existence: they exist, indeed, for they are from Thee, but they do not exist, for they are not what Thou art. For, that truly is which endures immutably.[57] Now, it is good for me to cleave God,[58] for, if I do not endure in Him, I cannot in myself. But He endures in Himself and renews all things,[59] and Thou art my Lord, since Thou art in no need of my goods.[60]

Chapter 12

(18) It was made manifest to me that it is because things are good that they can be corrupted. If they were the highest goods, they could not be corrupted. Unless they were goods, they could not be corrupted. For, if they were the highest goods, they would be incorruptible; but, if they were not goods at all, there would be nothing in them to be corrupted. For, corruption causes injury, and, unless there is a decrease of the good, there is no injury. Therefore, either corruption causes no injury, which is impossible, or, as is most certain, all things which are corrupted are deprived of good. Now, if they are deprived of every good, then they will not exist at all. For, if they continue to exist, but can no longer be corrupted, they will be better than before, because they will endure without corruption.[61] Now, what is more monstrous

57 Cf. *De nat. boni,* 19; 'For He is, indeed, Himself, because He is immutable, for every change makes what was existing to be non-existent [*non esse*].'
58 Ps. 72.27.
59 Wisd. 7.27.
60 Ps. 15.2.
61 That is, having lost all goodness, they would have nothing to lose and would be incorruptible. But, this is a metaphysical absurdity, leading to the conclusion that it is better to be not-good than good.

than to say that those things are made better by the fact that they have lost all good? So, if they are deprived of every good, they will not exist at all. Therefore, as long as they exist, they are good. So, too, whatever things exist are good, and that evil, whose source I was continually seeking, is not a substance. For, if it were a substance, it would be good. It would either be an incorruptible substance, and certainly a great good, or it would be a corruptible substance, which cannot be corrupted unless it is a good substance.

In this way, I saw and it was made manifest to me that Thou hast made all things good; in fact, that there are no substances which Thou hast not made. Since Thou hast not made all things equal, for that reason, because they are good considered individually and taken all together they are very good, all things exist. For, our God hath made all things very good.[62]

Chapter 13

(19) To Thee there is no evil at all; not merely to Thee, but to the totality of Thy creatures. For, beyond it, there is no thing which might break in and break up the order which Thou hast placed upon it. Now, in its parts, certain things may be considered evil because they are not in agreement with certain others. But, these same things are in agreement with yet others, so they are good, and in relation to themselves they are good.[63] All these things, which are not in agreement with each other, are suited to the lower order of things, which we call the earth and which possesses its own cloudy and windy heavens suitable to it. Perish the thought that I should now say: 'These things should not exist.' For,

62 Gen. 1.31; Eccli. 39.21; cf. below, 13.28.43, and, on the whole theory of the need for inequality in the created universe, *De civ. Dei* 11-22.

63 For Plotinus on the *relative* goodness of bodies, cf. *Ennead.* 3.2.7.

even if I perceived these things only, I might, indeed, desire better things. Rather, even now, for these things alone I should give Thee praise. For, they show that Thou art to be praised—'on earth dragons and all deeps, fire, hail, snow, ice and stormy winds which fufill Thy Word, mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars, beasts and all cattle, serpents and feathered fowl; kings of the earth and all people, princes and all judges of the earth, young men and maidens, old men and young, praise Thy name.'[64]

Since Thy praises come also from heaven, 'they praise Thee, our God, from on high, all Thy angels, all Thy hosts, sun and moon, all the stars and lights, the heavens of heavens and the waters that are above the heavens, praise Thy name.'[65] So, I now desired none better, for I thought over all of them, and, while the higher things are better than the lower, still I decided by a sounder judgment that all things together are better than the higher things alone.

Chapter 14

(20) There is no soundness[66] in them who regard any of Thy creatures with displeasure, just as there was none in me, when many things which Thou hast made were displeasing. Since my soul did not dare to consider God displeasing, it refused to consider anything which displeased it to be Thine. For this reason, it wandered into the theory of two Substances,[67] and it found no rest and talked nonsense. Recoiling from this, it had made for itself a god spread throughout the infinite space of all places, and it was of the opinion that he was Thee. It had taken him in to its heart, and was again

64 Ps. 148.7-12.
65 Ps. 148.1-5.
66 Cf. Ps. 37.4.
67 That is, Manichaean dualism.

made a place of worship for its idol, something to be abominated by Thee. But, afterwards, Thou didst bathe my head, while I was unaware of it, and close my eyes, so that they would not see vanity. I took a little rest from myself, and my delirium passed into sleep. I awakened within Thy influence and saw Thee as an altogether different infinity; and that vision did not take its start from the flesh.

Chapter 15

(21) I looked back on other things and saw that they owe Thee the fact of their existence, and that all things are bounded within Thee, but differently—not as if in a place; rather, because Thou art holding all with the hand of Truth. All things are true, in so far as they exist, nor is there any falsity, unless when one think something to be which does not exist.

And I saw that all things whatsoever are not only in agreement with their proper places, but also with their times, and that Thou, who alone art eternal, didst not begin to work after an innumerable succession of time intervals.[68] For, all intervals of time, both those which have passed and those which will pass away, neither would have gone away nor would come unless Thou art working and enduring.

Chapter 16

(22) From personal experience, I perceived that it is not unusual that even bread, which is good tasting to a healthy palate, is objectionable to an unhealthy one, and that light, which is attractive to unimpaired eyes, is offensive

68 For a full discussion of time and eternity, cf. below, 11.14.17 to 30.40.

to sore ones. And Thy justice displeases the wicked, to say nothing of the viper and the tiny worm, which Thou hast made good and in conformity with the lower parts of Thy creation, to which even these wicked people are in conformity to the same extent that they are less like Thee; but, they are in conformity with higher things to the extent that they become more like Thee. I asked what wickedness is, and did not find a substance, but a perversion of the will which is twisted away from the highest Substance, from Thee, O God, toward the lowest things—which is 'casting out its bowels'[69] and is swelling with greed for external things.[70]

Chapter 17

(23) I marveled that I now loved Thee, and not a phantasm in place of Thee. Yet, I did not stand still in the enjoyment of my God; rather, I was snatched up to Thee by Thy glory, but was soon snatched away from Thee by the natural weight of my will, and I fell back on these lower things with a groan. This was the weight of carnal custom However, Thy memory was with me; I was in no way doubtful that there was someone to whom I should cling; but I, who should cling, was not yet ready. For the 'body which is corrupted weighs down the soul and the earthly abode presses down the awareness of him who thinks on many things.'[71] I was very certain that Thy 'invisible things are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood through the things that are made—Thy everlasting Power and Divinity also.'[72]

---

69 Eccle. 10.10.

70 Cf. *De musica* 6.13.40: 'what does to advance toward external things mean, but to cast forth internal things; that is, to put God far from oneself, not in space but in one's mental affection?'

71 Wisd. 9.15.

72 Rom. 1.20.

For, I was looking for the source of my approval of the beauty of bodies, whether heavenly or earthly, and what enabled me to judge in a sound way concerning mutable things and to say: 'This should be this way; that, should not.' And so, in looking for this source of my judgments, when I did judge in this way, I had discovered the immutable and true eternity of Truth, above my mutable mind.

Thus, by a gradual process,[73] from bodies to the soul which senses through the body, and thence to its interior power to which bodily sensation takes messages about exterior things (and this is as far as brutes can go), and then further to the reasoning power, to which what is taken by the bodily senses is brought for judgment. And this power, also finding itself mutable in me, lifted itself to its understanding and withdrew the thinking process from the customary level, taking itself away from the contradictory crowds of phantasms, so that it might discover by what light it was besprinkled when it cried out without any hesitation that the immutable is to be preferred to the mutable; that it might know from this the immutable itself (for, unless it could know it in some way, it would not put it above the mutable with such certainty). And, in the flash of a trembling glance,[74] it reached up to THAT WHICH IS.

Then, truly, did I see clearly Thy invisible things, that are understood through those which are made. But, I was not able to keep my gaze fixed, and, when my weakness was beaten back, I returned to the ordinary things, bringing with me nothing but the loving memory which longed, as it were, for things whose odor had been scented, but which I was not yet able to eat.

---

73 Cf. *Ennead.* 5.1.11; 5.3.2. As De Labriolle remarks (*Conf.* 1.167): *tout ce langage est néo-platonicien.*

74 *in ictu trepidantis aspectus*: a famous phrase, describing the culmination of the *intellectual* search for God. A more spiritual phrase, *in ictu cordis,* will be used below, 9.10.24. The point is noted by Cayré in his analysis of Chs. 18-21 nn. 24-27 (*Initiation* 158-159).

Chapter 18

(24) I sought a way to obtain the strength which would be capable of enjoying Thee. I did not find it until I embraced the 'Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who is above all things, God blessed for ever,'[75] who calls out and says: 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life';[76] who combined the Food, which I was too weak to take, with flesh—for the Word was made flesh—in order that Thy wisdom, by which Thou hast created all things, might become milk for our infancy.

I was not yet humble enough to embrace as my God the humble Jesus, nor did I know what lesson His weakness could teach us. For, Thy Word, the eternal Truth, dwelling in supereminence above the higher parts of Thy creation, has elevated unto Himself those who are subject to Him. And in the lower parts, He has built Himself a humble home from our slime, so that He could detach those, who are to come under it, from themselves and bring them over to Himself, curing their pride and nourishing their love, so that they would advance no further in confidence in themselves, but, rather, grow weak, seeing at their feet the Divinity made weak by participation in the tunic of our skin.[77] Thus wearied, they might cast themselves down to It, while It, rising up, would elevate them.

Chapter 19

(25) But I thought differently. I thought of my Lord Christ only as of a man of excellent wisdom, whom no one else

75 Rom. 9.5; 1 Tim. 2.5.
76 John 14.6.
77 Cf. Gen. 3.21.

could equal.[78] Particularly, since He was born miraculously of a virgin, as an example of holding temporal things in contempt in comparison with the attainment of divine immortality, our real concern, He seemed to have merited very great authority as a teacher. However, what 'the Word made flesh'[79] meant as a mystery, I was not yet able even to suspect. I had found out only this much about Him from those writings which had been handed down: that He ate and drank, slept, walked, became joyful and sorrowful, engaged in conversation, and that this flesh could not have united to Thy Word, without a human soul and mind. Every man knows this who knows the immutability of Thy Word. I knew this already, in so far as I was able, nor did I have any doubt at all on that score. Indeed, to move the members of the body through the will on one occasion, and not to move them on another; to be affected by some feeling at one time, and not to be affected at another time; now to express wise views, and now to remain in silence—these belong to the mutability of the soul and mind. And, if these things written about Him were false, then all would be threatened by falsehood, and no saving faith in these writings would remain for mankind. So, since these things which are written are true, I recognized the whole man in Christ; not just the body of man, or a soul in the body but without a mind, but man himself. And I thought that He was set above all others, not by the very nature of truth, but by the singuar excellence of His human nature and His more perfect participation in wisdom.

Now, Alypius thought that Catholics believed that God took on flesh in this way: namely, that, besides God and

78 Cayré (*Initiation* 159) emphasizes this text for the understanding of Augustine's religious development; neither Augustine nor Alypius knew the ordinary Catholic teaching on the mystery of the Incarnation shortly before their baptisms.

79 John 1.14.

flesh, there was no soul in Christ. He considered that a human mind was not to be attributed to Him. And, since he held with solid conviction that the things which have been handed down traditionally about Him could not have been accomplished unless by means of a living and rational creature, he was moving more slowly toward the Christian faith. But, he learned later that this is the error of the Apollinarian heretics,[80] and he rejoiced at and became favorable to the Catholic faith.

But, I admit that I learned only some time later how the Catholic truth may be distinguished from the false position of Photinus,[81] on this point, that the Word was made flesh. Truly, the refutation of heretics makes the position of the Church, and the sound doctrine which it possesses, stand out clearly. 'For there must also be heresies, so that those who are approved may be made manifest among the weak.'[82]

Chapter 20

(26) But, having then read those books of the Platonists and after being thence admonished to seek the incorporeal Truth, I clearly saw Thy invisible things which are understood through the things which are made.[83] Though repulsed in this attempt, I perceived what it was I was not permitted, because of the darkness of my soul, to observe clearly. I was certain that Thou dost exist and that Thou art both infinite and yet not diffused throughout either finite or infinite space; and that Thou truly art He who art ever the same in Thy-

80 The heretical teaching of Apollinaris, Bishop of Laodicea *c.* 361, and his followers, that there was but one nature (the divine) in Christ; cf. Altaner *Patrologie* (1950) 270f.

81 Photinus, Bishop of Sirmium *c.* 340, thought Christ an inspired man; cf. Augustine, *Epist.* 147.19.

82 Cf. 1 Cor. 11.19; Rom. 14.1.

83 Cf. Rom. 1.20.

self,[84] never different in any part nor changing in any way so as to become different; and, indeed, that all the rest of things exist from Thee, and that this is proved solely and most definitely by the fact that they exist. I was certain indeed about these matters, but still too weak to enjoy Thee.

I prated just as if I were learned, yet, unless I had been seeking Thy way in Christ our Saviour, I should not have been learned but lost. I had now begun to desire to appear wise, for I was now filled with my own punishment and I did not weep; I was, moreover, puffed up with my knowledge.[85] Where was that charity building upon the foundation of humility, which is Christ Jesus? Or, when would these books teach it to me? I believe that Thou didst wish me to encounter them before I thought upon Thy Scriptures, precisely so that an impression would be made on my memory as to how I was affected by them. Thus, afterwards, when I had been made gentle by Thy books, and when my wounds had been touched by Thy healing fingers, I could perceive and distinguish what a difference there is between presumption and confession, between those who do indeed see where they must go, but do not see the way, and the Way[86] that leads to that happy land which is not only to be observed but to be lived in.[87]

For, if I had been first informed by Thy holy writings and if Thou hadst grown dear to me through my familiarity with them, and if I had later fallen upon those other books, perhaps they would have torn me away from a firm foundation of piety; or, if I had stood firm in the disposition which I had acquired as a saving influence, I might even

84 Cf. *De mor. Manich.* 6.8: 'for to be is related to permanent existence; so, what is said to be, in the highest and greatest way, is said to exist permanently [*permanendo*] in itself.'

85 For this and the following sentence, cf. 1 Cor. 8.1.

86 Cf. *De civ. Dei* 11.2, where Augustine speaks of Christ as the 'Way' to salvation; also, below, n. 104.

87 Cf. *De Trin.* 4.15.20.

have thought that this could be acquired from those books, if one had studied them alone.

Chapter 21

(27) And so, with greatest eagerness, I seized the venerable writings of Thy Spirit and, above all, of Thy Apostle, Paul. Those difficult problems, on which at one time the text of his discourse seemed to contradict himself and not to be in keeping with the evidence of the Law and the Prophets, disappeared. The unified form of these chaste spokesmen became clear to me, and I learned to rejoice with trembling. So, I started in and found that whatever truth I had read there[88] was expressed here, and with Thy grace to commend it, so that he who sees does not glory as if he had not received[89] not only what he sees but also the capacity to see (for, what has he that he has not received?). And thus, he is not only admonished to see Thee, who art ever the same,[90] but also to be healed so that he may hold Thee. He who cannot see from afar may, nevertheless, walk the way whereby he may come and see and hold. For, although man may 'be delighted with the Law of God according to the inner man,' what will be do about the other 'law in his members warring against the law of his mind and making him prisoner to the law of sin which is in his members'?[91] For Thou art just, O Lord, but we have sinned; we have wrought iniquity, we have acted impiously, and Thy hand has grown heavy upon us.[92] Justly have we been handed over to the old sinner, the lord of

88 I.e., in the works of the Platonists.
89 Cf. 1. Cor. 4.7.
90 Cf. Ps. 101.28.
91 Rom. 7.22,23.
92 Cf. Dan. 3.27,29; Ps. 31.4.

death, for he has induced a likeness of his own will in our will, whereby he did not stay in Thy Truth.[93]

What will unhappy man do? Who will deliver him from the body of this death, if not Thy grace through Jesus Christ our Lord,[94] whom Thou hast generated as co-eternal and made[95] in the beginning of Thy ways, in whom the Prince of this world[96] found nothing meriting[97] death, yet he killed Him and the handwriting was canceled,[98] which was against us?

Those writings do not contain this. Those pages do not show the countenance of this piety, the tears of confession, Thy sacrifice, a troubled spirit, a contrite and humble heart,[99] the salvation of a people, the promised city, the promise of the Holy Spirit, or the chalice of our redemption. In them no one chants: 'Shall not my soul be subject to God? From Him is my salvation: for He is my God, my Salvation and my Protector: I shall be moved no more.'[100] In them, no one hears Him calling: 'Come unto me, ye who labor.'[101] They disdain to learn from Him, for He is meek and humble of heart. Thou didst hide these things from the wise and prudent, and didst reveal them to little ones.[102]

It is one thing to see, from a wooded mountain top, the land of peace, and not to find the way to it, and to push on in vain over trackless country, in the midst of fugitive deserters

93 John 8.44.
94 Cf. Rom. 7.24,25.
95 *creasti*: representing the *creavit* of Prov. 8.22, here quoted. This reading (conforming closely to the Septuagint *éktise*) is regularly adopted by Augustine when he adduces this verse (cf. *De doct. Christ.* 1.34.38; *De fide et symoblo* 4.6; *De Trin.* 1.12.24); the Vulgate reads *possedit* (*possessed*). Cf. the long note in Pusey, *Conf.* p. 144 n. 2, on the Hebrew text. This is a focal point of controversy on the doctrine of the Incarnation.
96 I.e., the Devil; cf. John 14.30.
97 Cf. Luke 23.14,15.
98 Col. 2.14.
99 Ps. 50.19. For some of the following phrases, cf. Apoc. 21.2; 2 Cor. 1.22.
100 Ps. 61.2,3.
101 Matt. 11.28,29.
102 Matt. 11.25.

who attack and lie in ambush, with the lion and the dragon[103] as their leader—and it is quite another thing to keep to the way which leads there, which is made safe[104] by the care of the heavenly Commander, where they who have deserted the heavenly army may not commit their robberies, for they avoid it as a punishment.

These things penetrated to my very depths in wondrous ways, when I read the 'least of Thy apostles.'[105] I had looked upon Thy works, and I had been seized with wonder.[106]

---

103 Cf. Ps. 90.13.

104 Cf. *De civ. Dei,* 11.2: 'there is but one very safe Way against all errors. It must be at once God and man: God, as the End of man; man, as the means.'

105 Thus does St. Paul refer to himself, 1 Cor. 15.9.

106 Cf. Hab. 1.2 (Septuagint).

BOOK EIGHT

Chapter 1

My God, may I recall and confess Thy mercies to me, in the act of giving thanks to Thee. Let my bones be bathed with Thy love and let them say: O Lord, 'who is like to Thee?'[1] 'Thou hast broken my bonds: I will sacrifice to Thee the sacrifice of praise.'[2] How Thou hast broken them I shall tell, and all men who worship Thee will say, when they hear these things: Blessed be the Lord in heaven and on earth; great and wonderful is His Name.[3]

Thy words had clung tightly within the depths of my heart,

1 Ps. 34.10. This Book tells the story of Augustine's final religious conversion. In the first decades of the twentieth century, it became fashionable to deny the truth and honesty of Augustine's account of his conversion. Of the many scholars who maintained that he was converted to Neo-Platonism rather than to Catholicism, in 386, the following may be mentioned: H. Becker, *Augustin, Studien zu seiner geistigen Entwicklung* (Leipzig 1908) ; P. Alfaric, *L'évolution intellectuelle de s. Augustin* (Paris 1918) . The best rebuttal is offered by C. Boyer, *Christianisme et néo-platonisme dans la formation de s. Augustin* (Paris 1920) ; the essential points are well covered, in English, by Sister M. Patricia, *St. Augustine: Christian or Neoplatonist* (Milwaukee 1939) .

2 Ps. 115.16.

3 Cf. Ps. 75.2; 8.2.

and I was fenced in on all sides by Thee. I was certain concerning Thy eternal life, though I saw it 'in an obscure manner and as if through a mirror.'[4] However, all doubt had been removed from me, concerning the incorruptible Substance, and that every substance sprang from it. I was desirous, not of greater certainty concerning Thee, but of becoming more steadfast in Thee. All the things in my temporal life were in a condition of uncertainty. My heart had to be cleansed of the 'old leaven.'[5] The way itself, the Saviour, was pleasing, yet there was still some repugnance to walking His difficult ways.

Thou didst put the thought in my mind, and it seemed good in my view, to proceed to Simplicianus,[6] who seemed to me to be a good servant of Thine, for Thy grace shone in him. I had heard, too, that he had lived from his youth in great devotion to Thee. And now, at this time, he had grown old, and he had a great deal of experience in his long life of following Thy way with such good zeal. It appeared to me that he was learned in many things, and truly he was. The desire came to me to discuss my troubles with him, so that he might indicate what was the proper method for a man, disposed as I was, to walk in Thy way.[7]

(2) I saw the Church with its full membership; one man proceeded in this way, another in that. The worldly activities in which I was engaged were not pleasing to me and had become quite a burden for me, now that my desires were not inflamed, as they had been, by the hope for honor and wealth to support such a heavy servitude. For, now, these things held no delight for me in comparison with Thy sweetness and the

4 1 Cor. 13.12.
5 1 Cor. 5.7.
6 Simplicianus was an outstanding priest. At the death of St. Ambrose, in 397, he became Bishop of Milan. Augustine dedicated a special treatise to Simplicianus: *De diversis quaest. ad Simplicianum;* cf. Augustine, *Epist.* 37.
7 Cf. Ps. 127.1.

'beauty of Thy house which I loved.'[8] But, I was still firmly held in thralldom by woman. Nor was I prohibited by the Apostle[9] from marrying, though he did exhort to a better state, desiring greatly that all men live as he had. But, being weaker, I chose the easier place, and because of this one thing I was at sea in respect of everything else, enfeebled and consumed by exhausting cares, all because, having yielded and bound myself to the conjugal life, I was compelled to conform myself to it, even in some things that I was unwilling to undergo.

I had heard from the mouth of Truth that 'there are eunuchs who have made themselves so for the sake of the kingdom of heaven'; but, as is added, 'let him accept it who can.'[10] 'Vain, indeed, are all men in whom there is not the knowledge of God, and who by these good things that are seen could not discover Him that is.'[11] But, I was no longer in this condition of vanity. I had risen above it, and by the testimony of the whole of creation I had found Thee, our Creator, and Thy Word who is God along with Thee, and one God with Thee, through which Word Thou hast created all things.

And there is another kind of impious men, those who, 'knowing God, did not glorify Him as God or give thanks.'[12] I had also fallen into this error, and Thy right hand[13] took me, and, removing me from it, Thou didst place me where I could regain my health. For, Thou didst say to man: 'Behold, piety is wisdom,'[14] and: 'Do not desire to appear wise, for while professing to be wise they have become fools.'[15] And I

8 Ps. 25.8.
9 St. Paul; cf. 1. Cor. 7.27-35.
10 Matt. 19.12.
11 Wisd. 13.1.
12 Rom. 1.21.
13 Ps. 17.36.
14 Cf. Job 28.28: 'fear of the Lord, that is wisdom' (Vulgate).
15 Cf. Rom. 1.22.

had already found the 'precious pearl'[16] and I should have bought it, selling all that I had, but I still hesitated.

Chapter 2

(3) So, I went to Simplicianus, the spiritual father of Ambrose,[17] who was then bishop, in his reception into grace, and loved by Ambrose like a father. I told him the winding course of my error. When I mentioned that I had read some books of the Platonists, which Victorinus[18] (at one time a rhetorician in the city of Rome, who had, I heard, died a Christian) had translated into Latin, he congratulated me that I had not happened on the writings of other philosophers, filled with errors and deceptions, according to the elements of this world,[19] while in the writings of the Platonists God and His Word are indirectly introduced at every turn.

Then, in order to exhort me to the humility of Christ, which is hidden from the wise but revealed to the little ones,[20] he recalled Victorinus himself, whom he had known as a very close friend when he was in Rome. And he told me a story about him, concerning which I shall not keep silent.

16 Matt. 13.46.

17 Augustine's possible meaning, in speaking of Simplicianus as the spiritual father of Ambrose, is that Simplicianus assisted at the baptism of Ambrose, who had been a Roman governor in Milan until the year 374. Cf. Altaner, *Patrologia* (1944) 259.

18 Gaius Marius Victorinus, born toward the end of the third century in North Africa, went to Rome in 304, where he became a famous professor of rhetoric. At first a pagan and a bitter critic of Christianity, Victorinus became a Catholic after reading the Scriptures with the intention of refuting them. He probably made the first Latin translations of parts of Plotinus' *Enneads,* of some of Porphyry's works, and of the *Categories* of Aristotle. Cf. P. Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne* (Paris 1905) 3.378-422; and, for more recent bibliography and information on the extant works, P. De Labriolle. *Histoire de la littérature latine chrétienne,* 3me éd., rev. par G. Bardy (Paris 1947) 1.330; 375-379.

19 Col. 2.8.

20 Cf. Matt. 11.25.

It offers ample opportunity to praise Thy grace, which must be confessed unto Thee.

This very learned old man, skilled in all the liberal teachings, who had read and criticized so many works of the philosophers, the teacher of so many noble senators, a man who, as a mark of his distinguished career as a teacher, had deserved and received a statue in the Roman Forum (which the citizens of this world regarded as an outstanding honor), up to that time of his life a worshiper of idols and a participant in the sacrilegious mysteries whereby nearly all the Roman nobility were then puffed up, so that they breathed the cult of Osiris into the people,[21] about 'every kind of god, monsters, and Anubis the barking god,' who at times battled against 'Neptune, Venus and Minerva,'[22] and were beaten, but now Rome sought their help—these things the aged Victorinus had defended with the thundering of his frightening eloquence. Yet, he was not ashamed to be a slave of Thy Christ and a baby at Thy font,[23] having bent his neck to the yoke of humility and submitted his forehead to the reproach of the Cross.[24]

(4) O Lord, Lord, who hast bowed down the heavens and descended, who hast touched the mountains and they gave forth smoke,[25] by what means didst Thou work Thyself into that breast?

He read, as Simplicianus said, the holy Scripture and studied all the Christian writings with greatest care, examining them in detail. He used to say to Simplicianus, not openly, but in a private and friendly way: 'Do you know that I am

---

21 Reading *spirabat populo Osirim et* (following de Labriolle, who credits this emendation to Ihm); Skutella suggests *spirabat propolis iam et*. The passage is corrupt, even in the earliest Mss.

22 Cf. *Aeneid* 8.698-700.

23 That is, a newly baptized Christian; cf. John 3.5.

24 Cf. Gal. 5.11.

25 Cf. Ps. 143.5.

already a Christian?' The latter would reply: 'I will not believe it, or reckon you among the Christians, unless I see you within the Church of Christ.' But, he would smile and say: 'So, do walls make men Christians?' He said this often, that he was already a Christian, and Simplicianus often gave the same reply, and the bantering remark about the walls was often repeated. For, he was afraid of offending his friends, proud worshipers of demons; he thought that their enmity would fall heavily upon him from the peak of their high position in Babylon,[26] as from the cedars of Lebanon[27] which the Lord had not yet broken down. But, afterwards, by reading and longing, he gained firmness of mind and became afraid to be denied by Christ before the holy angels, if he were fearful of confessing Him before men.[28] By being ashamed of the mysteries of the humility of Thy Word and not being ashamed of the sacrilegious mysteries of proud demons which he had accepted as their proud follower, he appeared to himself to be guilty of a great crime. He put aside the shame arising from vanity and took on the shame arising from truth. Suddenly and unexpectedly, he said to Simplicianus (as the latter told the story): 'Let us go into the church; I wish to become a Christian.' The latter, overcome with joy, went along with him. Whereupon, he was introduced into the first mysteries of instruction[29] and, shortly

26 Babylon is taken to signify Rome with its seven hills (Apoc. 17.9) and a city of pride (Isa. 14.4).
27 Ps. 28.5 and Augustine's *Enarr.* on that verse: 'The voice of the Lord breaking down [*conterens*] the cedars; the voice of the Lord humbling the proud, by contrition of heart [*contritione*].'
28 Cf. Luke 12.9.
29 When Victorinus became a catechumen, he would be given elementary religious instruction; the sign of the cross made on his forehead, salt placed on his tongue, the imposition of hands—these rites associated with the catechumens are now performed at baptism.

afterwards, he also gave in his name[30] to be reborn through baptism, to the amazement of Rome and the joy of the Church. Proud men saw and grew angry; they gnashed their teeth and pined away.[31] But, the Lord God was his hope, for Thy servant, and he regarded not vanities and lying follies.[32]

(5) At, last, as the hour approached for the profession of faith (which at Rome was customarily uttered, by those who are about to enter into Thy grace, in set words learned and kept in memory,[33] and from a prominent place in full view of the crowd of believers),[34] an offer was made by the priests to Victorinus—Simplicianus said—to do it privately. It was customary to make this concession to such people as seemed likely to be frightened by embarrassment. However, he preferred to profess his salvation in the sight of the holy congregation. For, what he taught as a rhetorician was not productive of salvation, yet he had professed that in public. How much less, then, had he to fear Thy meek flock when he uttered Thy word, since he was not afraid of the crowds of madmen when uttering his own words?

Thus, when he got up to make his profession, everyone who knew him and all the people murmured his name among

30 The names of the catechumens were handed in before the start of Lent, and baptism was conferred on the night of Holy Saturday. Cf. L. Duchesne, *Origines du culte chrétien*, 5me éd. (Paris 1925) 310; F. X. Funk first pointed out that there was really no division of the catechumenate into four classes, as had long been maintained (*Theol. Quartalschr.* 65 [1883] 41-77; 71 [1889] 434-443).

31 Cf. Ps. 111.10.

32 Cf. Ps. 39.5.

33 The reference is to the public recital of the Creed.

34 Rufinus, a contemporary of Augustine, has left the earliest written record of the Latin text of the *Credo;* he also describes the ceremony of reciting it. *Comment. Symbolum Apostolorum* (*PL* 21.339).

themselves, with a resounding exclamation of thanksgiving. Who was there who did not know him? From the mouths of all who shared the common joy, there resounded a moderated shout: 'Victorinus! Victorinus!' Quickly they cried out in exultation at seeing him, and quickly they fell into an intense silence in order to hear him. He proclaimed the true faith with admirable confidence, and all experienced the desire to snatch him to their hearts. This they did with love and joy, for these were the hands by which they caught him up.

Chapter 3

(6) O good God, what is it that goes on in man, that he rejoices more at the salvation of a soul which has been despaired of and which has been delivered from a greater danger, than if hope had always been with it, or if the danger had been less? Thou too, O merciful Father, dost rejoice 'more over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine just who have no need of repentance.'[35] And we listen with great joy, when we hear how the straying sheep is carried back on the exultant shoulders of the Shepherd, and how the drachma is returned to Thy treasury, her neighbors sharing in the joy of the woman who found it. And the festal joy of Thy house sheds tears when they read there of that younger son of Thine, that 'he was dead and has come to life again, he was lost and is found.'[36] Indeed, Thou dost rejoice in us, and in Thy angels that are holy with a holy love. For, Thou art ever the same, who knowest always, and in the same manner, all things which are not forever in the same manner.

---

35 Luke 15.7ff.

36 Cf. Luke 15.24. See Augustine's sermon on the prodigal son, prompted by the reading of the parable as a Sunday gospel, as edited in *Misc. Agost.* I 256-264.

(7) And so, what goes on in the soul, when there is more delight that things which it loves have been found or returned, than if it had always possessed them? Many other cases agree in attesting to this and all things are filled with evidence proclaiming: 'It is so.' The victorious commander triumphs, but he would not have conquered unless he had fought; the greater the danger was in battle, the greater is the joy in the triumph. A storm tosses sailors and threatens shipwreck; all grow pale at the thought of impending death:[37] the sky and sea become peaceful, and, now, their joy knows no limits, for their fear was without limit. A loved one is sick and his pulse indicates the threat of danger; all those who desire to have him well grow sick at heart together with him. He gets better and walks again, though not yet with his former strength; still, there is already joy such as there never was when he walked well and strong before the illness. Men get these pleasures of human life, not just from unexpected and involuntary happenings, but from planned and voluntary hardships. There is no pleasure in eating and drinking unless they are preceded by the hardship of hunger and thirst. Drunkards eat salty foods, by which a disturbing thirst is produced; then a drink removes it and enjoyment is the result. It is an established practice for engaged girls not to be given immediately in marriage,[38] lest the husband, when she is given, hold her in low esteem because he did not long for her during an extended engagement.

(8) This is the case in shameful and blameworthy joy, in that which is permitted and legal, in that most honorable uprightness of friendship, in the case of the son who was dead and came back to life again,[39] who was lost and is

---

37 *Aeneid* 4.644: *Dido . . . pallida morte futura.*

38 Note that Augustine himself was to have been engaged for two years before marriage; cf. above, 6.13.23.

39 Cf. Luke 15.32.

found: in all cases the greater joy is preceded by the greater hardship.

Why is this so, O Lord my God, since Thou, Thou Thyself, art Thine own eternal joy, and since certain beings[40] made by Thee and dwelling near Thee experience everlasting joy—why is it that this our part of creation alternates between decline and progress, between affronts and reconciliations? Is this their mode of being, just what Thou didst grant, when from the highest heavens[41] to the lowest parts of the earth, from the beginning unto the end of the ages, from the angelic being down to the worm, from the first movement until the last, Thou didst place all the kinds of good things and all Thy just works each in its proper location, and didst accomplish each in its own time? Ah me, how exalted art Thou in Thy heights, how deep in Thy depths! Thou dost never withdraw, yet we return to Thee only with great difficulty.

Chapter 4

(9) O Lord, arouse us and recall us, enflame us and carry us off, make us ardent, attract us by Thy sweetness: let us love, let us run![42] Do not many men return to Thee from a deeper hell of blindness than Victorinus, approaching and being enlightened by the reception of the light, and, if they receive it, obtain from Thee the power to become Thy sons?[43] However, if they are less well known to the people, then, even they who know them rejoice less over them. For, when one rejoices along with many people, then joy is increased in each person,[44] because they warm themselves and are en-

40 These creatures near to God are the good angels.
41 Cf. Matt. 24.31.
42 Cf. Cant. 1.3: 'we will run after thee to the odor of thy ointments.'
43 Cf. John 1.12.
44 Note Augustine's awareness of the importance of crowd psychology.

kindled by each other. Then, too, those who are known to many people are of influence in the salvation of many, and, as they lead the way, many will follow. That is why there is much rejoicing for them even among those who have preceded them, for the rejoicing is not for them alone.

Far from me, of course, be the notion that in Thy tabernacle the rich should be more highly regarded than the poor, or the noble than the less well born,[45] since Thou hast rather chosen the weak things of the world, to put to shame the strong, and Thou hast chosen the ignoble things of this world, and the despised things and those which are not, as if they were, to bring to naught the things that are.[46] Yet this same man, 'the least of Thy apostles,'[47] by whose tongue Thou didst pronounce these words, when Paul the proconsul,[48] his pride conquered[49] through this man's warfare, was sent to pass under the light yoke of Thy Christ to become an ordinary subject of the great King, this man, though previously known as Saul, was desirous of being called Paul, in testimony of so great a victory. For the Enemy is more completely vanquished in the case of a man over whom he holds fuller sway and through whom he holds sway over a larger number of other men. Now, he has greater power over the proud, because of the prestige of nobility, and through the proud over a larger number of other men by means of the authority of the former. When, therefore, Thy sons thought with satisfaction of the heart of Victorinus, which the Devil had occupied as in an impregnable shelter, and of the tongue of

45 Cf. James 2.1-9; here, partiality toward persons is dealt with; the phrase, *acceptio personarum,* is the standard name for this vice of favoritism in later moral theory. Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* II-II, q. 63, art. 1-4.

46 Cf. 1 Cor. 1.27-29.

47 1 Cor. 15.9.

48 Augustine alludes to Acts 13.7, where the proconsul has the name Sergius Paulus. It is in verses 6-12 that the name Paul first appears as that of the Apostle.

49 *debellata superbia*: cf. *Aeneid* 6.853: *parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.*

Victorinus, which he had used as a great and sharp weapon to slay many, it was right that they should have rejoiced more abundantly because our King had bound the strong man,[50] and they saw his vessels taken from him to be cleansed and made suitable for Thy honor, and to become 'useful to the Lord for every good work.'[51]

Chapter 5

(10) When Thy servant, Simplicianus, told me this story about Victorinus, I burned to imitate him. This, of course, was why he had told it. When he added that, in the time of the Emperor Julian,[52] when Christians were prohibited by law from teaching literature and public speaking (Victorinus submitted willingly to this law, for he preferred to abandon the school of wordiness rather than Thy Word, by which Thou dost make eloquent the tongues of babes[53]), his courage seemed to me not greater than his good fortune, for he thus found the opportunity to devote his time to Thee. This is what I was sighing for, being tied down not by irons outside myself, but by my own iron will. The Enemy had control of the power of my will and from it he had fashioned a chain for me and had bound me in it. For, lust is the product of perverse will, and when one obeys lust habit is produced, and when one offers no resistance to habit necessity is produced. By means, as it were, of these interconnected links—whence the chain I spoke of—I was held in the grip of a harsh bondage. But, the new will, which had begun to be in me, to serve Thee for Thy own sake and to desire to enjoy Thee, O God, the only sure Joyfulness, was not yet capable

50 Cf. Matt. 12.29.
51 2 Tim. 2.21.
52 This happened in the year 362; cf. J. Bidez, *L'Empereur Julien, Oeuvres complètes* (Paris 1924) 46; and *De civ. Dei*, 18.52.
53 Wisd. 10.21; cf. Matt. 21.16.

of overcoming the older will which was strengthened by age. Thus, my two voluntary inclinations,[54] one old and the other new, one carnal and the other spiritual, were engaged in mutual combat and were tearing my soul apart in the conflict.

(11) Thus I came to understand by personal experience the text which I had read, how the flesh 'lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh.'[55] Of course, I was on both sides, but I was more on the side of what I approved within myself than on the side of what I disapproved within myself. For, I was less identified with this latter side, since in great part I suffered it unwillingly rather than acted willingly. Still, the habit that opposed me with greater vigor had risen out of my very self, since I had willingly reached a state which I found to be against my will. And who could justly protest if a just punishment pursues the sinner? I no longer had the excuse which permitted me to think that the reason why I had not yet given up the world to serve Thee was that my perception of truth was uncertain; for, now, it also was certain. But, still earthbound, I refused to fight under Thy command[56] and I feared as much to be freed of all my burdens, as one should fear to be hindered by them.

(12) So, I was agreeably laden with a worldly burden, as in a dream, and the thoughts by which I meditated on Thee were like the endeavors of those who desire to waken themselves, but who sink back, overcome by a deep sleep. Yet, just as there is no one who wants to sleep all the time, and in the sound judgment of all men it is preferable to be awake, many a man nevertheless puts off the act of disrupting his sleep when there is a heavy lethargy in his bodily parts, and, though it is time to get up, he chooses to enjoy the sleep that

54 Literally, 'two wills'; however, the English term, 'will,' has not the bi-valence of the Latin term, *voluntas,* which means both the power and the act of the power. What Augustine intends is: 'two initial tendencies of appetite.'

55 Gal. 5.17.

56 Cf. 2 Tim. 2.4.

is indeed not wholly pleasing. So was I sure that it was better to give myself over to Thy charity, rather than to give in to my own cupidity. But, while charity was attractive and was about to win its victory, cupidity was also alluring and held me in its fetters.[57] There was no answer for me to give to Thee, when Thou didst say to me: 'Awake, sleeper, and arise from among the dead, and Christ will enlighten thee.'[58] And, as Thou didst manifest from all sides the truth of Thy statements, there was not a thing for me to answer, being already convinced by the truth, but these slow and sleepy words: 'Later, just a bit later; wait a short time.' However, 'later and later' meant more than a bit, and 'wait a short time' lasted a long time. In vain was I delighted with that law of Thine according to the inner man, when the other law in my members was warring against the law of my mind and making me prisoner to the law of sin that was in my members. For, the law of sin is the force of habit by which the mind, though unwilling, is dragged and held tightly; rightly so, for the mind willingly slipped into this habit. Unhappy man that I was! Who should deliver me from the body of this death, except Thy grace through Jesus Christ, our Lord?[59]

Chapter 6

(13) I shall tell and confess unto Thy Name,[60] O Lord, my Helper and my Redeemer,[61] how Thou didst release me from the chains of desire for the pleasures of concubinage, by which I was most firmly bound, and from the bondage of worldly affairs.

---

57 *sed illud placebat et vincebat, hoc libebat et vinciebat*: the rhetorical form is difficult to put into English.
58 Eph. 5.14.
59 Rom. 7.22-25.
60 Cf. Ps. 53.8.
61 Ps. 18.15.

I was living my usual life with increasing anxiety, sighing for Thee every day, going often to Thy church, whenever my work, under the weight of which I continued to groan, left me free. Alypius was with me, no longer engaged in the work of a legal consultant now that the third session of the assessor's court was over. He was looking for people to whom he could again sell his legal advice, just as I was selling skill in speaking, if this can be furnished by teaching. Nebridius, however, had yielded to the demands of our friendship and was teaching as an assistant to Verecundus,[62] a very good friend of us all, a citizen and grammarian of Milan, who had urgently importuned and warmly begged, by virtue of this friendship, the trusted assistance of one of our group, which he greatly needed. Thus, it was not the desire of personal advantage which attracted Nebridius (he could have derived greater gains from his literary skill, had he desired), but, as a result of his courteous good will, this most lovable and gentle friend was unwilling to turn down our request. He worked most prudently at this task, guarding against becoming well known to personages who are important by this world's standards, and avoiding every mental disturbance by these measures, for he wished to keep his mind free and at liberty for as much time as possible, in order to pursue his own studies, to read or to hear something about wisdom.

(14) So, on a certain day (I do not recall the reason why Nebridius was away), a man named Ponticianus[63] came to visit myself and Alypius at our home. He was a compatriot of ours, in the sense that he was from Africa, and the holder of an important position at court. I do not know what he desired of us. We sat down together to have a talk. Just by

62 Verecundus later permitted Augustine and his friends to use his country home at Cassiciacum as a place of retirement before baptism; cf. below, 9.3.5.

63 A minor government official, Ponticianus is not otherwise known than by this reference.

chance, he noticed a book on the games table before us. He picked it up, opened it, and to his surprise, no doubt, discovered that it was the Apostle Paul. He had thought it one of the books which I was wearing myself out in teaching. He looked at me with a smile and expressed his felicitations and surprise at unexpectedly finding this work, and only this work, before my eyes. In fact, he was a Christian and a faithful one, accustomed to go on his knees before Thee, our God, in frequent and lengthy prayers in church. When I pointed out to him that I was devoting much attention to these writings, he began to tell the story of Anthony,[64] the Egyptian monk, whose name shone very brilliantly among Thy servants, but was unknown to us up to that time. When he discovered this, he dwelt upon this point in his conversation, giving much information about this man to us who were ignorant, and expressing surprise at this ignorance of ours. We were amazed, of course, to hear of Thy miracles, of such recent memory and almost in our own times, which were well supported by testimony—miracles performed in the right faith and in the Catholic Church. We were all in a condition of wonder: we two, because these things were so important; he, because we had not heard of them.

(15) From this, his conversation turned to the groups in the monasteries, to their manner of living, sweet with Thy odor, and to the populating of the waste spaces of the desert: of all this we knew nothing. There was even a monastery at Milan, outside the city walls, filled with good brothers under the patronage of Ambrose, and we did not know of it. He went right on speaking of his subject, while we remained silent and engrossed. Then, he happened to tell

64 The *Life of St. Anthony* (not yet published in the new critical edition by H. G. Opitz, whose first volume appeared in Berlin in 1934) was written in Greek by St. Athanasius *c.* 357. Translated into Latin before 385, by Evagrius of Antioch (cf. *PG* 26.835-976), it did much to influence the growth of Western monasticism.

how he and three companions (I do not know at what time, but certainly it was at Treves[65]), during the time of the afternoon that the emperor was attending the show in the circus, went out for a walk in the gardens beside the city walls. There, they happened to pair off, he taking one companion with him, and the other two wandering off likewise, but in another direction. This second pair, strolling along, happened upon a hut where were dwelling some of Thy servants who are 'poor in spirit, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven.'[66] There, they found a book, in which the *Life of Anthony* had been written. One of them began to read it, and to wonder, and to catch the spark. As he read, he thought of embracing such a life and of giving up secular affairs to serve Thee. (They belonged to the group of officials called 'special agents.'[67]) Then, suddenly filled with a holy love and angry at himself with virtuous shame, he turned his eyes to his friend and said to him: 'Tell me, I beg of you, what goal do we hope to achieve with all these efforts of ours? What are we looking for? What reason have we for engaging in public service? Could our aspiration at the court be anything greater than to become "friends of Caesar"?[68] And what is not unstable and full of danger in that position? Through how many dangers must one go to reach a greater danger? And when will one reach it? Now, if I wish, I can be a friend of God immediately.'

He said this and, in the throes of giving birth to a new life, he looked again at the text. As he read, he was changed

---

65 Trèves (Trier) on the Moselle was one of the residences of the Roman emperors in the late Empire. Gibb-Montgomery (*Conf.*, p. 217.7) conjecture that the incident took place in the reign of Emperor Gratian, who spent much time at Trèves.

66 Matt. 5.3.

67 *agentes in rebus*: a group of imperial functionaries employed in collecting taxes, messenger work, government inspection, and police work; cf. H. M. Gwatkin in *Cambridge Medieval History* I (1936) 36f.

68 *amici imperatoris*: members of the immediate Court circle; cf Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 4.1.42-50.

within, in the part which Thou didst see. His mind withdrew from the world, as soon became evident. For, while he read and his heart surged up and down, he groaned at times as he made his decision. He decided in favor of the better, being now Thine, and said to his friend: 'I have just divorced myself from that ambition of ours and have determined to serve God. I shall begin this service from this hour and in this place. If you do not care to do likewise, do not speak in opposition.' The other man replied that he would cleave to his companion for so great a reward and so important a service. The two men then began building their tower for Thee, making the necessary outlay,[69] leaving all their possessions and following Thee.

At this point, Ponticianus and his associate were walking in other parts of the garden and searching for the others. Arriving at the same place and finding them, they advised them to return, for the day was now drawing to a close. The others told about their decision and their resolution; how such a desire arose and became firmly established in them. They begged them not to offer any opposition, if they refused to join them. These two men[70] were not changed from their former disposition, yet they wept for themselves (so Ponticianus said) and loyally felicitated the others, commending themselves to their prayers. With their hearts still dragging along on the earth, they went away to the imperial court, while their friends, with hearts fixed on heaven, remained in the hut.

Both men were engaged to be married. When their fiancées heard about this, they also dedicated their virginity to Thee.

69 Cf. Luke 14.28.
70 Ponticianus and his friend.

Chapter 7

(16) This was Ponticianus' story. Thou indeed, O Lord, didst twist me back upon myself, while his words were being uttered, taking me away from behind my own back, where I had placed myself because I was unwilling to look at myself, and Thou didst set me right in front of my own face so that I might see how ugly I was, how deformed and vile, how defiled and covered with sores. I saw and was filled with horror, yet there was no place to flee from myself. If I attempted to turn my gaze away from myself, he kept on telling his story, and Thou didst again place me before myself, thrusting me up before my eyes, so that I would discover my iniquity and detest it. I recognized it, but pretended not to: I thrust it from my sight and out of my mind.

(17) At this time, the more ardent was my approval of these men (having heard of their salutary inclinations and how they had given themselves entirely to Thee in order to be healed), the more abhorrent was my condemnation of myself in comparison with them. For, many of my years (about twelve) had flowed by since that period in my nineteenth year when, having read the *Hortensius*[71] of Cicero, I was aroused by the love of wisdom. I continued to put off the rejection of earthly happiness whereby I might have been free to investigate that wisdom, whose mere quest—not to speak of its discovery—should have been preferred to the actual finding of treasures and kingdoms among men, and to being surrounded by corporeal pleasures at my beck and call. Yet, as a youth, I was quite unhappy, unhappy in the beginning of the period of adolescence. I even begged chastity of Thee, saying: 'Give me chastity and self-restraint, but not just yet.' I was afraid that Thou wouldst quickly heed my

71 Cf. above, 3.4.7; the present passage is important in establishing the chronology of Augustine's early life.

prayer, that Thou wouldst quickly cure me from the disease of concupiscence, which I preferred to be appeased rather than to be abolished. And I had walked the crooked ways[72] in sacrilegious superstition, not exactly certain in it, but preferring it in a way to other teaching which I did not search out with sincerity but which I fought against with enmity.

(18) I maintained the opinion that the reason why I was deferring from day to day[73] the rejection of worldly ambition, in order to follow Thee alone, was because nothing by which I could direct my course seemed certain to me. But the day had come on which I was laid bare before myself. My conscience uttered this rebuke within me: 'Where is your tongue? Of course, you have been saying that you are unwilling to cast off the burden of vanity because the true is not certain. See, now it is certain, yet this burden still presses down upon you, while they, who have not been worn out in such a search and have not thought over these things for a decade or more, have taken wings on their less burdened shoulders.'[74]

Thus was I gnawed from within and exceedingly troubled by a fearful shame, while Ponticianus spoke of such things. When he finished his conversation and the business for which he had come, he went his way, and I to myself. What did I not say within me? With what lashes of judgment did I not whip my soul so that it would follow me who yearned to follow Thee? Yet, it balked; it refused and made no effort to be excused. All arguments were used up and refuted. There remained only dumb fear. As if from death, my soul shrank back from being restrained from the flux of habit, in which it was wasting away unto death.

72 Cf. Eccli. 2.16.

73 Cf. Eccli. 5.8.

74 Cf. Augustine's explanation of these 'wings' in *Enarr. in Ps.* 118, *sect.* 13. Plato (*Phaedrus* 249) says that the soul of the philosopher may take wings much more quickly than the soul of the ordinary man, because he has never lost sight of the divine, which the wings symbolize.

Chapter 8

(19) Then, in that great struggle within my inner abode—which I had forcibly provoked with my soul in that little room of ours, my heart—being disturbed as much in my countenance as in my mind, I rush in upon Alypius and cry out:[75] 'What is wrong with us? What does this mean, this story you heard? Unlearned men are rising up and storming heaven,[76] while we with our teachings which have no heart in them, here we are tumbling about in flesh and blood! Is it because they have led the way that we are ashamed to follow, yet are not ashamed of the fact that we are not following?'

I said some such words, and then my mental agitation tore me away from him; while he kept silent, terrified as he looked upon me. Not even my voice sounded as usual. Forehead, cheeks, eyes, complexion, the way I spoke, gave more indication of my mental condition than did the words I uttered.

A little garden belonged to our residence, and we used it as we did the rest of the house, for our host, the landlord, did not live there. The tumult in my breast carried me out there, where no one could hinder the burning struggle which I had entered upon against myself; to what solution, Thou didst know, but I did not. Yet, my madness was healthful and my dying was life-giving; I was aware of the extent of my evil, but I was unaware of the extent of the good I would shortly attain.

So, I withdrew to the garden, and Alypius followed in my footsteps. There was no lack of personal privacy for me when he was present. Moreover, how could he abandon me in such a frame of mind?

---

75 Augustine is using the historical present for vividness.
76 Cf. Matt. 11.12.

We sat down as far away from the building as possible. I was shaken in spirit, angered by a most violent indignation at the fact that I did not enter into an agreement and covenant with Thee, O my God, for all my bones[77] cried out that I should make this step, and extolled it to the heavens with praises. Entry into this agreement did not require boats or chariots or movement of the feet; I did not even have to go as far as we had gone from the house to the place where we were sitting. For, not merely to go, but actually to reach that disposition, meant nothing else than to wish to go—strongly and completely of course, not just a half-wounded wish, turning now to this and now to that, nor a will threshing about in a struggle wherein, when one part rises up, another part is cast down.

(20) At last, in these seething fevers of irresolution, I began to make many gesticulations, such as men wish to make at times, yet cannot, either because they have not the members, or because these members are bound in chains, or are undone by illness, or are hindered in some way. If it were a matter of pulling my hair, or striking my forehead, or grasping my knee with clenched fingers, I did it because I wished it. But, I could have wished and yet not done it, if the mobility of my members had not obeyed. Thus, I did so many things, in situations where willing was not identical with the power to act. Yet, I did not do the thing which was incomparably more attractive to me and which I was capable of executing just as soon as I had the will to act, for, as soon as I had willed it, then surely I willed it. In this case, the ability was identical with the will, and the act of willing was itself the performance. Yet, it was not done. It was easier for my body to obey the slightest wish of my soul, moving its members at a mere nod, than for my soul to obey itself for the carrying out, in the will alone, of a great act of will.

77 Ps. 34.10.

Chapter 9

(21) What is the source of this monstrosity? What purpose does it serve? Let Thy mercy shine forth and let me ask the question, if perchance the mysteries of men's punishments and the darkest griefs of the sons of Adam can answer me. What is the source of this monstrosity? What purpose does it serve? The mind[78] commands the body and is immediately obeyed; the mind commands itself and is resisted. The mind commands the hand to be moved and its readiness is so great that command can hardly be distinguished from enslavement. Yet, the mind is the mind, while the hand is the body. The mind commands the mind to will; it is not something else, yet it does not do it. What is the source of this monstrosity? What purpose does it serve? It commands, I say, that the will-act be performed, and it would not issue the command unless it willed it, yet its command is not carried out.

But, it does not will it completely, and so it does not command it completely.[79] For, it commands to the extent that it wills; and what it commands it not done, to the extent that it does not will it, since the will commands that there be a will, not another will, but its very self. So, it does not command with its whole being; therefore, its command is not fulfilled. For, if it were whole, it would not command that it be done; it would already be done. Hence, it is not a monstrosity to will something in part and to oppose it in part; it is rather an illness of the mind, which, though lifted up by truth, is also

78 Throughout this section, as elsewhere in the *Confessions*, 'mind' translates *animus*. More precisely, *animus* means the rationally conscious soul; cf. *De civ. Dei* 7.23.1, and Gilson, *Introduction à l'étude de s. Augustin* (2me éd.) 56-57.

79 The problem of the act of moral command (*imperium*) is particularly difficult in a psychology such as Augustine's, where the faculties of the soul are not clearly distinguished. St. Thomas makes the *imperium* an act of intellect, founded on a preceding act of will (*S.T.*, I-II, q. 17, 1, c.) Instead of this, Augustine distinguishes incomplete will-acts of command from complete ones.

weighed down heavily by habit; so it does not rise up unimpaired. And, thus, there are two voluntary inclinations, neither one of which is complete, and what is present in one is lacking in the other.

Chapter 10

(22) Just as vain talkers and those who seduce the mind perish from before Thy presence,[80] O God, so let those perish who, noticing the two voluntary tendencies in the process of deliberation, maintain that there are two natures belonging to two minds: the one a good nature; the other, bad.[81] Truly, they themselves are evil when they entertain these bad opinions, and the same men will themselves become good if they form true opinions and give their assent to those that are true. As Thy Apostle says to them: 'You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.'[82] For, they wish to be light, not in the Lord but in themselves, being of the opinion that the nature of the soul is what God is. Thus, they have become denser darkness, since they have, with terrifying arrogance, departed farther from Thee—from Thee, the 'true Light which enlightens every man who comes into the world.'[83] Give heed to what you say, be ye ashamed and come ye to Him and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be confounded.[84]

When I was deliberating on the immediate act of becoming a servant of the Lord, my God, as I had intended for a long time, it was I myself who willed it, it was I who willed it not; it was I in both cases. Yet I neither willed it fully, nor refused wholly to will it. So, I struggled with myself and

80 Ps. 67.3.
81 Augustine has the Manichaean theory of two wills, one good and the other bad, in mind; cf. *De duabus anim. c. Manich.* 1.1.
82 Eph. 5.8.
83 John 1.9.
84 Ps. 33.6.

divided myself from myself. And this disintegration went on involuntarily within me, yet it did not demonstrate the nature of an alien mind but punishment[85] of my own. Therefore, it was not I who did this work, but the sin that dwelt in me, arising from the punishment of a sin of a freer man,[86] for I was a son of Adam.

(23) Indeed, if there are as many opposed natures as there are voluntary inclinations which offer mutual resistance, then there will be not two wills, but many. If a person deliberates whether he will go to one of their meetings,[87] or to the theatre, they cry out: 'See, two natures; the good one draws in this direction, the bad one draws away in that. Otherwise, whence come this hesitation of opposed wills within him?' But, I say they are both bad, both the one which draws the man to them and the one which draws him away to the theatre. But, they will not believe that there is anything but good in that which leads men to them. Suppose, now, one of our people deliberates and hovers within himself between two disputing inclinations of will, whether to go to the theatre or to our church, would they not themselves hesitate in giving an answer? For, either they will admit, against their will, that to go to our church is based on good will, just as they who go to church are initiated into and engaged in its mysteries, or else they will think that two bad natures and two bad minds are struggling within the one man, and their customary statement will then not be true: that there is one good and the other evil. Or else they will be con-

85 The punishment (*poena*) is that of original sin. In the following sentence Augustine borrows from Rom. 7.17.

86 Adam originally enjoyed *libertas,* in the sense that he was free to will the good and to avoid sinning; after the Fall, man has *liberum arbitrium,* which consists in the ability to choose either good or evil. Fallen man is, then, less free than Adam in the state of original justice, and less free than a blessed soul in heaven which has regained its *libertas. Cf. Opus imperf. c. Julian.* 6.11; cf. Gilson, *Introd. à l'étude de s. Augustin* (2me éd.) 212-213.

87 I.e., of the Manichaeans.

verted to the truth and will not deny that, when a person deliberates, the one soul is agitated by contrary inclinations of will.

(24) So, when they perceive that two wills are in conflict with themselves within one man, let them no longer say that two contrary minds arising from two contrary substances and from two contrary principles are fighting, one being good and the other evil. For, Thou, the truthful God, dost disprove them, dost refute and convict them: for instance, when both wills are bad, and someone deliberates whether to kill a man with poison or with steel; whether to steal this part or another part of another man's land, when he cannot steal both; whether to purchase sensual pleasure at extravagant cost or hoard his money with avarice; whether to go to the circus or the theatre,[88] if both are having a performance on the same day—or (adding a third possibility) to go instead to rob another's house, the occasion presenting itself, or (with even a fourth) to set out to commit adultery, if at the same time the possibility of doing so presents itself. If all these possibilities come together in one instant of time, and all are simultaneously desired, but cannot be put into effect at the same time, then they tear the mind to pieces within itself by the opposing tendencies of four volitions, or even by a greater number, so numerous the things that can be desired; yet, the Manichees are not accustomed to claim that there is such a plurality of different substances.

The same is true in the case of good inclinations of will. For, I ask them whether it be good to take delight in the reading of the Apostle, and whether it be good to take delight in a solemn psalm, and whether it be good to discourse upon the Gospel. To each question they will answer: 'It is

88 Throughout the *City of God,* Augustine misses no opportunity to condemn theatrical performances. His criticism seems to be based on two points: the obscenity of the shows and the association of the show with pagan festivals. Cf. *De cat. rudibus* 16.24.

good.' What then? If they are all equally delightful at one and the same time, then are not contrary wills drawing the heart of man in various directions, while deliberation proceeds as to which action we should seize upon first? All these inclinations are good, yet they vie with each other until one action is chosen, whereto may be directed, one and entire, the will which before had been split into several tendencies.

Thus, too, when eternity delights from above and the sensual appeal of a temporal good pulls from below, it is the same soul which wishes the one or the other, but with a will that is not entire, and so the soul is torn apart with the weight of its vexation while truth causes it to prefer the former, but habit does not permit it to put aside the latter.

Chapter 11

(25) So, I was sick at heart and suffered excruciating torture, accusing myself with a bitterness that far exceeded the customary. I twisted and turned in my chains, until they could be completely broken, for I was now held but weakly by them, but still held. And Thou didst urge from within my depths, O Lord, whipping me in the strictness of mercy with double scourges[89] of fear and shame, lest I should again relapse and fail to break that weak and thin chain which remained, while it would become strong again and bind me more firmly.

Within myself, I kept saying: 'Here, do it now, do it now,' and, as I spoke, I was already progressing to the moment of decision. Now, I was almost ready to do it, yet I did not. I did not fall back into my previous state, but stood quite near and recovered my breath. I tried again and I was almost there—almost—I was practically grasping and holding it.

89 Cf. *Aeneid* 5.457: *dextra ingeminans ictus.*

Yet, I was not there; I neither grasped nor held it, hesitating to die unto death and to live unto life. Stronger within me was the accustomed worse than the unaccustomed better. The closer that point in time came, at which I would become a different being, the more terror did it strike within me; it did not force me back or turn me aside, it held me in suspense.

(26) What held me were the trifles of trifles and vanities of vanities,[90] my former mistresses, plucking softly at the garment of my flesh and whispering: 'Do you send us away?' and: 'From this moment unto eternity, we shall not be with you, and: 'From this moment unto eternity, this and that will not be permitted you.' What suggestiveness was there in that phrase, 'this and that'—O my God, what suggestiveness! May Thy mercy avert its gaze from the soul of Thy servant! What sordid things, what indecencies, did those words suggest! Yet, I far less half heard them now, for it was not as though they openly opposed me by going straight for me; rather, they murmured from behind me, furtively twitching, as it were, at me, as I moved to depart, so that I would look back. Yet, they did retard me, hesitant as I was to tear myself away and to cut myself off from them, and to make the leap to the position to which I was called, for, all-powerful custom said to me: 'Can you live without these things, do you think?'

(27) But, it now was saying this very feebly. For, from the direction to which I had turned my face and to which I was afraid to pass, the chaste dignity of continence began to manifest itself: tranquil and joyful, but not in a lascivious way, inviting me in upright fashion to come ahead and not hesitate; stretching forth to receive and embrace me holy

90 *vanitates vanitantium*: cf. Eccle. 1.2, which has *vanitas vanitatum*. Later in life, Augustine became aware of the latter reading (*Retract.* 1.7.3: in ref. to *De mor. eccles. Cath.*), but he did not (in the *Retractations*) suggest a change in this text of the *Conf.*, which rests on good Ms. authority.

hands filled with a multitude of good examples. There, so many boys and girls; there, youth in great number; people of every age; venerable widows; women grown old in virginity—and in them all continence herself was in no way barren, but the fecund mother[91] of children, of joys coming from espousal with Thee, O Lord.

With mocking encouragement, she[92] mocked me, as if saying: 'Can you not live as these men and women do? In fact, do these men and women live by their own powers and not by the Lord their God? The Lord their God gave me to them. Why do you stand upon yourself and so have naught to stand on? Throw yourself upon Him, fear not; He will not pull Himself away and let you fall. Throw yourself confidently; He will take you up and heal you.' I was much ashamed, for I still heard the whisperings of those trifles, and hung as one in suspense. Again, she seemed to say: 'Turn a deaf ear to your unclean members on the earth, in order that they may be mortified. They tell you a story of delights,[93] but not as the Law of the Lord thy God.' This dispute within my heart was simply myself in opposition to myself. But Alypius kept right at my side and waited in silence for the outcome of my unaccustomed emotion.

Chapter 12

(28) Now, when profound consideration had pulled out from the hidden depth and heaped together the whole of my wretchedness before the gaze of my heart, a mighty storm arose, bringing a mighty rain of tears. And, in order to shed the whole of it, with its accompanying groans, I stood up, away from Alypius (to me solitude seemed more fitting for

91 Cf. Ps. 112.9.
92 I.e., chaste continence.
93 Ps. 118.85.

the business of weeping), and I withdrew to a distance greater than that at which even his presence could be an annoyance to me. That is the way I felt then, and he perceived it; I suppose I said something or other, and my inflection revealed a voice weighted with tears, and so I had risen. Hence, he stayed where we had been sitting and was much astonished. I threw myself down under a fig tree, unconscious of my actions, and loosed the reins on my tears.[94] They burst forth in rivers from my eyes, an acceptable sacrifice[95] unto Thee. Not, indeed, in these words, but with this meaning, I said many things to Thee: 'And Thou, O Lord, how long?[96] How long, O Lord, wilt Thou be angry unto the end? Remember not our former iniquities.' For I still felt that I was held by them and I uttered these wretched words: 'How much longer, how much longer? "Tomorrow" and "tomorrow"? Why not right now? Why not the end of my shame at this very hour?'

(29) I kept saying these things and weeping with the bitterest sorrow of my heart. And, behold, I heard from a nearby house the voice of someone—whether boy or girl I know not—chanting, as it were, and repeating over and over: 'Take it, read it! Take it, read it!' And immediately, with a transformed countenance, I started to think with greatest concentration whether it was the usual thing for children to chant words such as this in any kind of game, and it did not occcur to me that I had ever heard anything like it. Having stemmed the flow of my tears, I got up, taking it to mean that nothing else was divinely commanded me than that I should open a book and read the first passage that I should find. For I had heard about Anthony[97] that he had

94 *habenas lacrimis*: cf. *Aeneid* 12.499: *irarumque omnes effudit habenas.*
95 Cf. Ps. 50.19.
96 Ps. 6.4; 78.5,8.
97 Cf. 8.6.14. In *Epist.* 55.37 (written about the same time as the *Conf.*) Augustine disapproves chance consultations of the Gospels for guidance in worldly affairs.

been admonished from a reading of the Gospel on which he had come by chance, as if what was being read was said for him: 'Go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me,'[98] and by such a revelation he was at once converted to Thee.

And so I went hurriedly back to the place where Alypius was sitting. I had placed there the copy of the Apostle, when I had got up from the place. Snatching it up, I opened it and read in silence the first passage on which my eyes fell: 'Not in revelry and drunkenness, not in debauchery and wantonness, not in strife and jealousy; but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and as for the flesh, take no thought for its lusts.'[99] No further did I desire to read, nor was there need. Indeed, immediately with the termination of this sentence, all the darknesses of doubt were dispersed, as if by a light of peace flooding into my heart.

(30) Then, having marked it either with my finger or with some other sign, I closed the book and, with a now peaceful face, informed Alypius. Then, he gave an account of what was going on within him, of which I was in ignorance. He asked to see what I had read. I showed him and he paid attention even beyond that part which I had read. I did not know the section which followed. Actually, the continuation read: 'But him who is weak in faith, receive.'[100] This, he applied to himself and he disclosed it to me. But he was strengthened by this admonition, in a decision and resolution which was good and most suitable to his moral qualities, in which he had far surpassed me for a long time, and he joined in without any trouble or delay.

After that, we went in to my mother and told her; she rejoiced. We gave her the story of what had happened; she

98 Matt. 19.21.
99 Rom. 13.13.
100 Rom. 14.1.

was exultant, triumphant, and she blessed Thee, 'who art able to accomplish far more than we ask or understand.'[101] She saw that much more in regard to me had been granted her by Thee than she was wont to ask with her unhappy and tearful laments. For Thou didst turn me unto Thee, so that I sought no wife or any ambition for this world, standing on that rule of faith[102] where Thou hadst shown me in the revelation of so many years before. And 'Thou didst turn her mourning into joy,'[103] much more abundant than she had desired, and much more fond and pure than she sought from any grandchildren of my flesh.

101 Eph. 3.20.
102 Cf. above, 3.11.19.
103 Ps. 29.12.

BOOK NINE

Chapter 1

O LORD, 'I AM THY SERVANT: I am Thy servant and the son of Thy handmaid. Thou hast broken my bonds; to Thee will I offer the sacrifice of praise.'[1] May my heart praise Thee and my tongue, and all my bones say: 'O Lord, who is like to Thee?'[2] Let them say it, and do Thou answer me and say to my soul: 'I am Thy salvation.'[3]

Who am I and what am I? What evil has there not been in my action; and, if not in my action, then in my speech; or, if not in my speech, then in my will? Yet Thou, O Lord, art good and merciful and didst look propitiously upon the depths of my death and didst empty out[4] with Thy right hand the sea of corruption from the lowest region of my heart. And the whole thing amounted to this: not to will what I willed but to will what Thou didst will.

1 Ps. 115.16-17.
2 Ps. 34.10.
3 Ps. 34.3.
4 The Latin is so forceful that it is rather crude. Both De Labriolle (*Conf.* 2.207) and Gibb-Montgomery (*Conf.* 232) note that Cicero explains (*De lege agraria* 2.26.70) that the expression, *exhauriendum esse,* is not used in the best circles.

But, where was my free choice during that period of so many years, and from what deep and secret hiding place was it called forth at the instant on which I bowed my neck under Thy gentle yoke and my shoulders under Thy light burden, O Christ Jesus, my Helper and my Redeemer?[5] How sweet it suddenly became for me to do without the sweetness of trifling things, and it was now a joy to put aside those things which I had been afraid of losing.

For, Thou didst cast them out from me, Thou true and highest Sweetness, and Thou didst enter in their place, sweeter than every pleasure of sense, but not for flesh and blood; brighter than any light, but more hidden within than any secret thing; exalted above any honor, but not for those who are exalted in themselves. Now, my mind was free from the biting cares of ambition, of acquisition, of rolling about and scratching the scab of lust. I spoke like a child to Thee, to my Brightness, my Wealth, and my Salvation, O Lord, my God.

Chapter 2

(2) In Thy sight I preferred not to break away with much fuss, but, rather, quietly to withdraw my tongue's service from the market places of eloquence, so that the youths who were no meditators on Thy Law, or on Thy Peace, but on foolish falsehoods and wordy wars, could no longer make purchases, from my mouth, of weapons for their own madness.

Fortunately, very few days now remained until the vintage vacation,[6] so I decided to put up with them and take my

5 Ps. 18.15; this appears to be the only place in the *Confessions* where Christ is addressed by name.

6 The period from the last week of August to the middle of October was a traditional holiday season and its observance was established by Imperial law (*Cod. Theod.* II.8.19; *Cod. Just.* III.12).

departure in the ordinary way; for, being now ransomed by Thee, I could not return to be put on sale.

And so, our resolution was evident before Thee, but before men it was known only to our intimate friends. It had been agreed among us that it should not be divulged indiscriminately to anyone, although, as we were ascending from the vale of tears and singing the canticle of the steps,[7] Thou, with sharp arrows and coals hadst armed us against a deceitful tongue which, pretending to advise, would oppose us, and, as people behave in regard to food, in loving us, would devour us.

(3) Thou hadst pierced our heart with the arrow[8] of Thy charity, and we carried Thy words transfixing our bowels. The examples of Thy servants, whom Thou hadst changed from black to shining white, and from the dead to the living, gathered together in the bosom of our thought, burned and consumed our heavy lassitude, lest we bend down to base things. They fired a strong flame in us, so that every gust of opposition from a deceitful tongue could only make our flame burn more brightly and not extinguish it.

Nevertheless, because, as a result of Thy Name which Thou hast made blessed throughout the earth, our vow and promise would certainly have attracted the praises of men, it seemed like ostentation not to wait for the now near vacation time, but to depart ahead of time from an occupation which was public and situated before the eyes of all. Thus, the gaze

7 Augustine's words echo the general titles of Psalms 119-133, which are 'gradual canticles.' The original meaning of 'steps' in this usage is obscure; possibly, the reference was to the hymns sung by the Jewish people in ascending the steps of the Temple, or the steps may symbolize the ascent to perfect virtue. In the following sentence Augustine quotes from the first 'gradual canticle' (Ps. 119.4)

8 This text may possibly bear some historical relation to the picture of a heart transfixed by an arrow, as it often appears in later Christian art. Cf. Gibb-Montgomery, *Conf.* 234, where a fuller treatment of the symbolism is cited from Augustine's ***Enar. in ps.*** 119.5.

of everyone would be turned upon my action;[9] for, were I to desire to anticipate the approaching advent of the vacation time, they would talk a great deal about how I seemed to want to appear a great man. And what advantage was there to me in this, to have them conjecturing and contending about my intentions, and reviling our good?[10]

(4) Moreover, there was the fact that during that summer my lungs had begun to fail as a result of excessive work in teaching. It was difficult to breathe, and the lesion showed itself in chest pains[11] and in an inability to speak with a loud voice or for a long time. At first, it had worried me, for it practically forced me by its present urgency to put aside the burden of teaching, or certainly to stop for a time, if I could be cured and grow well again. But when the full wish, 'to be still and see that Thou art the Lord,'[12] arose in me and was established (Thou knowest, O my God), I even began to rejoice. For, this was also available as an excuse, which was no lie, and which would moderate the opposition of men who would be quite unwilling, because of their children, for me to resign.

Filled, then, with such joy, I endured this interval of time which was still to pass (I am not sure, but there were about twenty days), but they were rendered tolerable only by fortitude. For, the desire of sense goods, which ordinarily enabled me to bear the heavy work, had left me and I should have

9 Augustine's words, *ut conversa in factum meum ora cunctorum intuentium,* show that he had not forgotten his Vergil: *Conticuere omnes intentique ora tenebant . . .* (*Aeneid* 2.1).

10 Rom. 14.16.

11 The chest trouble may have been something like asthma; the climate at Milan must have been quite rigorous for a native of North Africa. In later years, Augustine preached almost daily. His illness of this period is also mentioned in *Contra acad.* 1.3, *De beata vita* 1.4 (*'pectoris dolor'*), and *De ordine* 1.5; cf. B. Legewie, 'Die körperliche Konstitution und die Krankheiten Augustins,' *Miscellanea Agostiniana* 2.5-21.

12 Ps. 45.11.

been overburdened had not patience come to take its place.

Some of Thy servants, my brethren, might say that it was a sin for me, now that I was whole-heartedly in Thy service, to permit myself to sit even for one hour in the chair of falsehood. I do not argue the point. But Thou, O Lord most merciful, surely Thou hast pardoned me and remitted this sin, too, as well as many other frightful and deadly ones, in the holy water?[13]

Chapter 3

(5) Verecundus[14] was tormented with anxiety as a result of this good fortune of ours. He saw that he was to be forced to part company with us, because he was held very tightly by his own bonds. Not yet a Christian, he was held back from the way on which we had entered by the fact that his wife was one of the faithful, and that made her a more difficult shackle than any others, for he said that he would not be a Christian in any other way than in that which was barred to him.[15] However, he kindly offered to let us occupy his property for as long as we would stay there. Thou wilt repay him, O Lord, at the resurrection of the righteous, for Thou hast already awarded him their lot. For, though after we had left and were in Rome, he was overcome by a bodily illness, and during it became a Christian and one of the faithful, and departed from this life. Thus wert Thou compassionate, not only to him, but also to our group, for we would have suffered excruciatingly to think of our friend's

13 Augustine refers to the sacrament of baptism received after these events; cf. below, Ch. 6.

14 Cf. above, 8.6.13.

15 The whole group surrounding Augustine was aiming at the life of of religious perfection, predicated on celibacy. Verecundus could not leave his wife, who was already a Catholic.

outstanding kindness to us, if we were not able to reckon him as part of Thy flock.

Thanks be to Thee, our God. We are Thine. Thy exhortations and consolations show it. Faithful to Thy promise, Thou wilt grant to Verecundus in return for that country place of his, Cassiciacum,[16] where we took our rest in Thee, free from the turmoil of the world, the pleasure of abiding in Thy Paradise, where things are eternally green, for Thou hast forgiven him his sins upon earth, in the curdled mountain, Thy mountain, the mountain of abundance.'[17]

(6) And so, Verecundus was then in anguish, but Nebridius[18] shared our joy. Though he, too, was not yet a Christian and had fallen into that pit of most harmful error, so that he believed the flesh of Thy Son, who is the Truth, to be but a phantasm, he had risen above this and was in the condition of one who has not yet received any sacrament of Thy Church, but who is a most zealous searcher for the truth. Not long after our conversion and regeneration through Thy baptism, he also became a faithful Catholic, serving Thee with perfect chastity and continence, in Africa with his own people; when his whole household had become Christian through his efforts, Thou didst release him from the flesh.

Now, he lives 'in Abraham's bosom.'[19] Whatever it may

---

16 The situation of the villa of Cassiciacum remains a point of discussion. Most Italian authorities place it in the Brianza district, north of Milan. From Augustine, *Epist.* 26 (*montesque per altos*), it is known that the Alps could be seen from Cassiciacum. Cf. F. Meda, 'La controversia sul "Rus Cassiciacum,"' *Miscel. Agost.* 2.49-59; G. Morin. 'Où en est la question de Cassiciacum?' *La Scuola Cattolica* ser. VI, 9 (Jan. 1927) 51-56.

17 Cf. Ps. 67.16, where, in Augustine's Psalter, the first of the three phrases quoted (*in monte incaseato*) provides an assonance with the word *Cassiciaco.*

18 Regarding Nebridius, cf. above, 4.3.6; 8.6.13.

19 Luke 16.22. Augustine expresses some doubt as to the meaning of this phrase (*Epist.* 164.7-8, 187.7); but in A.D. 419, he wrote: 'Understand "Abraham's bosom" as a distant and hidden seat of quiet, where Abraham is' (*De an. et ejus orig.* 4.16.24).

be that is signified by 'bosom' in that phrase, there my Nebridius lives, my gentle friend, and now, no longer a freedman, Thy adopted son, O Lord.[20] There he lives, for what other place is there for such a soul? There he lives, in the place about which he used to ask me, a poor ignorant man, many questions.[21] Now, he does not place his ear to my mouth, but his spiritual mouth to Thy fountain, and, in proportion to his eagerness, he drinks as much as he can, of wisdom, happy without end. But, I do not imagine that he can be so intoxicated by it as to forget me, since Thou, O Lord, of whom he drinks, art mindful of us.

That is how we were: comforting Verecundus who was saddened by this conversion of ours, but in unbroken friendship, exhorting him to the faith proper to his state, that is, the conjugal life; waiting for the time when Nebridius would follow us. And the possibility of this was so near at hand; he was practically ready to do it when at last these days had ended. They seemed long and many in view of my love of the liberty of leisure to sing from the marrow of all my bones: 'My heart hath said to Thee: I have sought Thy face; Thy face, O Lord, will I still seek.'[22]

Chapter 4

(7) The day came on which I was actually to be released from the profession of rhetoric, from which I had already been released in my thinking. And the deed was done. Thou didst deliver my tongue, as Thou hadst already

20 Cf. Gibb-Montgomery, *Conf.* 238.12.

21 The correspondence between Augustine and Nebridius (*Epist.* 3-14) deals with many difficult religious and philosophical problems: the influence of the stars on the soul, the possibility of an immaterial body for the soul, the Incarnation, and similar topics.

22 Ps. 26.8.

delivered my heart from it. I blessed Thee in my joy, having departed for the country house with all my associates.[23] What I did there, in the way of writings—now indeed dedicated to Thy service but still breathing forth, as in a rest period, the school of pride—my books of discussions,[24] with others present and with myself in Thy presence alone, may show. The letters give evidence of what things were discussed with Nebridius while he was away.

When shall I have enough time to bring back in memory all Thy great benefactions toward us during that period, especially when I must hasten on to other incidents greater still? My inner recollection recalls them and it becomes sweet unto me, O Lord, to confess to Thee by what inner spurs Thou didst completely subdue me, and how Thou didst level me down, 'having made low the mountains and hills'[25] of my thoughts, and how Thou didst make straight my crookedness and smooth my rough ways. How, moreover, Thou didst make Alypius, that brother of my heart, subject to the Name of Thy Only-begotten Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, which he at first considered unfitting to be included in our writings.[26] For, he wished them to exude the odor of the cedars of the schools, which the Lord has already

---

23 From the Cassiciacum dialogues and this book of the *Confessions,* we know that Monica, Navigius (Augustine's brother), Adoedatus, (Augustine's son), Alypius, Trygetius, Licentius (all three, former pupils of Augustine), Rusticus, and Lastidianus (his cousins) accompanied Augustine to the country place.

24 These dialogues, written in imitation of Cicero, are: *Contra academicos, De beata vita,* and *De ordine.* The *Soliloquia* is an artificial dialogue (i.e., not based on actual discussion) recording Augustine's own nightly meditations.

25 Cf. Isa. 40.4; Luke 3.4-6.

26 The hesitancy about including the name of Christ in the dialogues was due to a desire to follow the style of Cicero. However, Christ is named in *Contra acad.* 3.20.4; and the 'Son of God' is mentioned in *De beata vita* 4.34. In *De ordine* Christ is named five times; see three instances, 1.10.29.

broken, rather than that of the herbs of the Church, which are protection against the serpents.[27]

(8) What cries did I give forth to Thee, O my God, when I read the Psalms of David,[28] those canticles of the faith, those songs of piety which admit of no pride of spirit! As one uninitiated in Thy true love, I spent my vacation in the country place with Alypius, a catechumen like myself, and with my mother, who, in that close association with us, was womanly in her dress but virile in her faith, mature in her serenity, motherly in her love, Christian in her piety. What cries I used to utter while saying those Psalms, and how I was fired by them with love for Thee! I burned to recite them, if I could, throughout the whole world against the pride of mankind! And, of course, they are sung throughout the world, 'and there is no one that can hide himself from Thy heat.'[29] How indignant, in my strong and bitter sorrow, did I grow at the Manichaeans. I pitied them, too, for their ignorance of these mysteries, these remedies, for their insane opposition to the antidote by which they could be restored to sanity! I wished they were somewhere nearby, then, without my knowing of their presence, and that they might observe my face and hear my words, as I read the fourth Psalm in that period of leisure, and see how that Psalm affected me: 'When I called upon Thee, O God of my justice, Thou didst hear me: in my distress, Thou hast enlarged me. Have mercy on me, O Lord, and hear my prayer.'[30] Would that they had heard, while I was unaware of their hearing it, lest they should think that it was on their account I said

---

27 Cf. Ps. 28.5. The cedars seem to represent the proud heights of pagan learning; the serpents are the symbols of evil; and the herbs are the lowly but curative means of salvation. Cf. Campbell-McGuire, *Conf.* 171.23.

28 The reader will have noted how well Augustine came to know the Psalms; his language in the *Confessions* is a constant reminder that he knew these beautiful texts by heart.

29 Ps. 18.7.

30 Ps. 4.2. This begins a brief commentary on Psalm 4.

things which I interpolated among these words; for, in truth, I should not have said them, nor in this way, if I had perceived that I was being heard or seen by them. And, if I had said them, they would not have taken them as they were spoken—with myself and to myself in Thy presence and coming from the intimate affection of my mind.

(9) I shivered with fear, and, at the same time, grew warm with hope and exultation in Thy mercy, O Father. All these things went forth through my eyes and voice, when Thy good Spirit turned to us and said unto us: 'O ye sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity and seek after lying?'[31] Indeed, I had loved vanity and sought after lying. And Thou, O Lord, already 'had made Thy holy One great,'[32] raising Him from the dead and setting Him on Thy right hand, whence He should send his promise from on high,[33] 'the advocate, the Spirit of Truth.'[34] And He had already sent Him, but I did not know it. He had sent Him, for He had already been made great, rising from the dead and ascending into heaven. Before that, 'the Spirit had not yet been given, seeing that Jesus had not yet been glorified.'[35] And the Prophet cries out: 'How long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity and seek after lying? Know ye also that the Lord hath made his holy One great.'[36] 'How long,' he cries; 'Know ye,' he cries; and I, being ignorant for so long, loved vanity and sought after lying, and so I heard and trembled, since it was said to such as I recalled I had been. Among the phantasms, indeed, which I had held in place of truth, there were vanity and lying. I gave voice, deeply and loudly, to many things in the sorrow of my remem-

31 Ps. 4.3.
32 Ps. 4.4. Augustine uses *magnificavit* in place of the Vulgate's *mirificavit*.
33 Cf. Luke 24.49.
34 John 14.16.
35 John 7.39.
36 Ps. 4.3-4.

brance. I wish they could have heard them, those who still love vanity and seek after lying! Perhaps they would have been greatly moved and would have vomited all that up. Thou wouldst have forgiven them when they cried unto Thee, for He who intercedes to Thee for us died a true death in the flesh.[37]

(10) I read: 'Be ye angry, and sin not,'[38] and how I was moved, O my God, I who had already learned to grow angry at myself for things of the past, in order that I should not sin in regard to the time that remained. It was right that I grew angry, for it was not some other nature from the race of darkness which sinned for me, as they claim who do not become angry at themselves and 'treasure up to themselves wrath on the day of wrath and of the revelation of Thy just judgment.'[39]

Nor were my goods now outside; nor were they sought with fleshly eyes in the light of this sun. For, those who wish to find their joy externally turn easily to vanities. They pour themselves out upon the things which are seen and which are temporal. They lick their images in hungry cogitation. Oh, if they could but grow weary with fasting and say: 'Who will show us good things?' We might answer, and would that they could hear it: 'The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us.'[40] For, it is not we who are the light 'which enlightens every man;'[41] rather, we are enlightened by Thee, so that, having been 'once darkness, we may now be light in Thee.'[42] Oh, if they might see that inner, eternal Light which, now that I had savored it, was causing me to gnash my teeth in my inability to show it to them, even if they were to

37 Cf. Rom. 8.34.
38 Ps. 4.5.
39 Rom. 2.5.
40 Ps. 4.6,7.
41 John 1.8.
42 Cf. Eph. 5.8.

bring me their heart in their eyes which were turned outward and away from Thee, as they said: 'Who will show us good things?' There, indeed, where I had grown angry at myself, in the innerness of my private little room,[43] where I had been pricked, where I had offered a sacrifice, slaying my old self and, in the first thoughts of my renovation, putting my hope in Thee—there didst Thou begin to show me Thy sweetness and 'didst give gladness in my heart.'[44] As I was reading these things outwardly and discovering them inwardly, I cried out. I did not wish to be 'multiplied'[45] by means of earthly goods, devouring temporal things and being devoured by them, since I possessed other 'corn, wine and oil' in the Eternal Simplicity.

(11) At the next verse, I cried out with a cry from the depths of my heart: 'Oh, in peace! Oh, in the Selfsame!' Oh, why did he say: 'I shall grow drowsy and take my sleep.'[46] For, who will resist us when the word that is written will come to pass: Death is swallowed up in victory?'[47] And Thou art, above all, the Selfsame, Thou who dost not change. In Thee is the rest which forgets all labor, for no other being is with Thee;[48] nor hast Thou established me to seek after the many other things which are not Thee, but 'Thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope.'[49]

I read and was set on fire. Yet, I could not find what to do with these deaf and dead men, of whom I had been one, a cursed person, a bitter and blind barker against those writings

43 I.e., in Augustine's heart; cf. *Enarr. in ps.* 4.6.

44 Ps. 4.7.

45 Ps. 4.8: 'By the fruit of their corn, their wine, and oil, they are multiplied.'

46 Ps. 4.9. *De vera religione* 2.41 explains *id ipsum* (*epi tò autó* in the Septuagint) as meaning the 'Immutable and Singular Nature' [of God].

47 1 Cor. 15.54.

48 Cf. Deut. 4.35; Isa. 45.5.

49 Ps. 4.10.

honeyed with the honey of heaven and lighted with Thy light. I began to hate the enemies of this Scripture.[50]

(12) When shall I bring back the memory of all the events of those vacation days? But, I have not forgotten; nor shall I remain silent regarding the severity of Thy scourge and the wonderful celerity of Thy mercy.

Thou didst torment me at that time with a toothache. When it became so bad that I could not talk, the notion arose in my heart[51] to urge all my friends who were there to pray for me to Thee, the God of every manner of good health. I wrote down this request on a wax tablet and gave it to them to be read. As soon as we had bent our knees with a prayerful disposition, the pain fled. But, what pain? And how did it pass away? I was terrified, I admit, my Lord and my God. I had never had such a experience from the beginning of my life. Thy power to command was deeply impressed upon me, and, rejoicing in faith, I praised Thy Name. Yet, this faith did not permit me to be free from care about my past sins, which had not yet been remitted by Thy baptism.

Chapter 5

(13) When the days of the vintage vacation were at an end, I sent an announcement to the citizens of Milan that they should provide another vender of verbosity for their students, because I had chosen to serve Thee and also because I could not meet the demands of that calling on account of my difficulty in breathing and the pain in my chest.

I also informed Thy bishop, the saintly man Ambrose, by letter, concerning my former errors and my present resolution, so that he might advise me which of Thy books would

50 Cf. Ps. 138.21.
51 Cf. Jer. 32.35; 1 Cor. 2.9.

be best for me to read in order that I might be better prepared and in more suitable condition for the reception of so much grace. He prescribed Isaias the Prophet, because, I believe, he is more plainly a foreteller of the Gospel and of the calling of the Gentiles than are the others. But, since I did not understand my first reading in this book and thought it all as difficult, I put it aside in order to take it up again when I should be more practised in the Lord's way of speaking.

Chapter 6

(14) Then, when the time came at which it was required that I should submit my name,[52] we left the country and returned to Milan. Alypius, also, decided to be reborn in Thee, along with me, for he had already taken on the humility[53] appropriate to Thy sacraments and had even gone so far, in his very forceful mastery of his body, as to tread the ice-covered soil of Italy with bare feet, a daring and unusual venture.

We also included with us the boy, Adeodatus, born of me in the flesh as a result of my sin.[54] Thou hadst fashioned him well. He was almost fifteen years old and surpassed many serious and learned men in his mental endowment. I am but confessing to Thee Thy gifts, O Lord my God, Creator of all, who hast much power to reform our deformities, for I was responsible for nothing but the sin in that boy. Thou, and no other person, hadst inspired us to have him nourished by us in Thy teaching: to Thee I confess Thy gifts.

52 Cf. above, Bk. 8 n. 30.

53 Cf. Col. 3.12.

54 Adeodatus was born in Carthage, *c.* 371-372, the son of Augustine and the nameless women mentioned above, 4.2.2; 6.15.25.

There is a book of ours written under the title, *On the Teacher.*[55] In it, he converses with me. Thou knowest that all the views which are included in it as coming from the person of my interlocutor are his, when he was in his sixteenth year. I found many other more amazing qualities in him. His talent was for me a matter of awe, and who but Thee is the worker of such wonderful things? Thou didst take his life quickly from this earth[56] and my memory of him is more free from concern, since I have nothing to fear for his boyhood or adolescence, or anything for him as a man. We associated him with us as our contemporary in Thy grace, to be trained in Thy studies. So, we were baptized and the anxiety for our past life fled from us.

Nor was I sated during those days with the wonderful sweetness of considering the depth of Thy counsel concerning the salvation of mankind. How many tears did I shed, as I was deeply stirred by the voices of Thy Church sweetly swelling in the singing of Thy hymns and canticles![57] Those voices flowed into my ears, and truth was distilled into my heart, and a feeling of piety welled up from it. The tears poured forth, and I was happy with them.

Chapter 7

15) The Church in Milan had not long begun this kind of consolation and exhortation, in which the voices and hearts

---

55 This dialogue, *De magistro,* is extant (*PL* 32.1193-1220) and is an important source of information on Augustine's theory of knowledge.

56 Adeodatus died after the return to Africa, *c.* 389.

57 This passage is important in the history of Christian liturgy. The Church in the East used hymns long before antiphonal singing was introduced to the West by St. Ambrose. Cf. P. De Labriolle, *S. Ambroise* (Paris 1908) 87-95; *Life and Times of St. Ambrose* (New York 1928) 39-65.

of the brethren joined in zealous harmony. It was about a year, or not much more, since Justina, the mother of the boy emperor, Valentinian, persecuted Thy servant Ambrose,[58] as a result of the heresy into which she had been seduced by the Arians.[59] The faithful flock stayed night and day in the church, prepared to die with their bishop, Thy servant. My mother, Thy handmaid, was one of the leaders in these cares and vigils, living on prayers. We ourselves, as yet unheated by the warmth of Thy Spirit, began to feel the city-wide emotion and unrest.

At that time, the practice of singing hymns and psalms, according to the custom of the East, was established so that the people would not become weak as a result of the boredom of sorrow. It has been retained from that day to this; many—in fact, nearly all Thy flocks—now do likewise, throughout the rest of the world.

(16) Then, Thou didst reveal in a vision to Thy bishop, who has just been mentioned, the place where the bodies of the martyrs Protasius and Gervasius[60] lay hidden. Thou hadst concealed them uncorrupted for so many years, in Thy secret treasury, from which Thou mightest produce them at the opportune moment, in order to restrain the madness of a woman,

58 St. Ambrose tells (*Epist.* 20.19) how the empress insisted on the Catholics handing over one of the important Milanese churches to the Arians. He replied that it would be wrong for him to do that and reminded her that the Imperial authority did not apply to the Church, saying: 'To God, what is God's; to Caesar what is Caesar's; the palaces belong to the emperor, the churches to the priest.'

59 The Arian heresy, begun by Arius (256-336), denied that Christ was of the same Substance as the Father. Cf. Augustine, *De agone Christiano,* 16.18, trans. R. P. Russell (*Fathers of the Church,* New York 1947) 333.

60 The discovery of the bodies of these two martyrs, who suffered death in the time, apparently, of Nero, is also recounted by St. Ambrose, *Epist.* 22.2, and Paulinus, *Vita Ambrosii* 14. For a very full discussion of this incident in reference to this passage in the *Confessions,* cf. P. Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions* (Paris 1950) 139-153.

even though an empress. Brought to light and unearthed with fitting reverence, they were moved to the Ambrosian Basilica. And not only were those whom unclean spirits tormented made well, when these demons acknowledged their presence, but also a certain man, who had been blind for many years and well known as a citizen throughout the city, asked and was told the reason for the tumultuous joy of the people. He jumped up and begged his guide to bring him thither. When he had been led there, he obtained admittance so that he might touch the bier with his handkerchief, 'for precious in Thy Sight is the death of Thy saints.'[61] When he did this and put the handkerchief up to his eyes, they were immediately opened. The news of this spread, and, as a result, Thy praises were fervent and glowing. And, though the mind of the enemy Justina was not brought to the sanity of belief, at least it was restrained from the insanity of persecution.

Thanks be to Thee, O my God! Whence and whither hast Thou guided my recollection, so that I might even confess these things to Thee which, though important, I had passed over in my forgetfulness. Yet, even then, when the 'odor of Thy ointments'[62] smelled so sweet, we did not 'run after Thee.' And so, I wept the more during the singing of Thy hymns, having tried for so long a time to catch a breath of Thee, and now, finally, being able to breathe Thee in, to the extent that breath can find space in a house of grass.[63]

Chapter 8

(17) Thou, 'Who dost make men of kindred minds to

61 Ps. 115.15.
62 Cant. 1.3.
63 I.e., in the human body; cf. Isa. 40.6: 'All flesh is grass.'

dwell in one house,'[64] didst also bring Evodius,[65] a young man from our own town, into our group. He served as a special government agent, was converted to Thee and baptized before us, and, having left worldly service, was girded in Thine. We were together, intending to live together in holy agreement.

We looked for some place which would offer us the opportunity to serve Thee in a more useful way; we were returning together to Africa. While we were at Ostia on the Tiber,[66] my mother died.

I pass over many things, for I am in a great hurry. Receive my confessions and my thanks, O my God, for numberless things, even when I am silent. But, I shall not pass over whatever my soul brings forth concerning that servant of Thine who brought me forth in the flesh, so that I was born into the light of time—and in the heart, so that I was born into the light of eternity. I would speak not of her gifts, but of Thine in her. For, she had not made herself, nor had she brought herself up. Thou didst create her; neither her father nor her mother knew what kind of person would spring from them. The rod of Thy Christ, the discipline of Thine only Son in a faithful household, a sound member of Thy Church,[67] instructed her 'in Thy Fear.'[68]

In regard to her training, she did not commend her mother's carefulness as much as that of a certain elderly maidservant who had carried her father about as a baby, just as little ones are customarily carried on the backs of grown-up girls. Because of this service and on account of her old age

64 Ps. 67.7; the revised English version has: 'God who maketh men of one manner to dwell in a house'; this does not bring out the *unanimes* of Augustine's text.

65 Evodius was a man of fine mind and good education. He is one of the chief speakers in Augustine's dialogues *De libero arbitrio* and *De quantitate animae*. Consecrated Bishop of Uzala in 396, he remained a life-long friend and co-worker of Augustine.

66 Ostia was the port of Rome; cf. *Aeneid* 1.13.

67 Monica's family was thoroughly Christian.

68 Ps. 5.8.

and excellent behavior, she was much respected by those in charge of that Christian home. As a result, she also had the care of the daughters of the family and was assiduous in this, restraining them, when necessary, as one stern in her pious severity, and tutoring them with virtuous prudence.

Except at those times when they were fed very temperately at the parental table, she would not permit them to drink even water, although they might be burning with thirst, thus preventing the formation of a bad habit and making this wise statement in addition: 'You now drink water only because you are not in charge of the wine; however, when you are married and become the mistresses of storerooms and wine-cellars, water will lose its appeal, but the habit of drinking will continue.' By this system of giving practical advice and commanding by means of her authority, she reined in the greediness of the younger years and moulded that thirst of the girls according to the measure of virtue, so that, eventually, that which was unfitting was also unpleasing.

(18) Just the same, it developed surreptitiously, as Thy servant [Monica] told the story to me, her son, that the craving for wine grew upon her. When, in the customary way, she, as a sober girl, was told by her parents to draw wine from the cask, and, having dipped the cup through an opening on the top, before pouring the wine into the decanter, she used to take a little sip with the tips of her lips. She could not take more, because she felt a repugnance for it. She did this not from any immoderate craving, but as a result of a certain overflowing of youthful spirits which bubble over into absurd actions and are usually held down in the minds of children by the weight of the authority of older people.

So, by the addition of a little bit each day to the original sip ('for he that contemneth small things falls by little and little'[69]), she had fallen into the habit of eagerly gulping down cups almost full of wine.

69 Eccli. 19.1.

Where, then, was the wise old woman, and her stern prohibition? Would anything prevail against a hidden disease, unless Thy medicine[70] watched over us,[71] O Lord? In the absence of father and mother, and of nurses, Thou art present, Thou who dost create, who dost call, who dost even work some good for the salvation of souls through men who are in positions of authority.[72]

What didst Thou do then, O my God? From what source didst Thou provide a cure? From what source didst Thou restore her to health? Didst Thou not bring forth a hard and sharp taunt from another soul, like a healing scalpel from Thy secret repository, and cut off that decayed matter with one slash?

The maid with whom she used to go to the wine cask began to quarrel with her young mistress, and, as a result, when they were alone with each other, she cast up this misdeed, calling her a wine-bibber,[73] by way of most bitter insult. Stung to the quick by this goad, she looked upon her own foulness, immediately condemned it, and cast it from her.

Just as friends may pervert by their flattery, so do enemies often correct by their criticism. Thou dost not repay them for what Thou workest through them, but for what they themselves desired. That angry girl desired to vex her young mistress, not to cure her; and it happened in privacy, either because the time and place of the quarrel happened to find them alone, or because she feared lest she herself fall into danger through having delayed her denunciation for so long.

But Thou, O Lord, the Ruler of things heavenly and

---

70 I.e., divine grace.

71 Cf. Jer. 31.28.

72 *per praepositos homines*: the text would seem to be corrupt; Knöll suggests *reprobos* for *praepositos*, but there is no Ms. authority for the emendation.

73 *meribibulam*: the word occurs only in Augustinian terminology, being found also in *Op. imperf. c. Julian.* 1.68, where it appears that some Pelagian critic picked it up from the *Confessions*.

earthly, who dost twist the depths of the torrent to Thine own use, and the flood of the centuries to regulated violence, dost even make one soul healthy through the unhealthy fury of another, so that no one, noticing this, may attribute to his own power the fact that another is corrected by his words, even though he intends to correct him.

Chapter 9

(19) Brought up in this modest and sober manner, made subject to her parents by Thee rather than to Thee by her parents, given in marriage when she reached a suitable age, she served this man 'as her lord.'[74] She was eager to win him for Thee,[75] speaking to him of Thee through her behavior, in which Thou didst make her beautiful, reverently lovable, and wonderful to her husband. Thus, she even put up with wrongs of infidelity, never permitting any dissension with her husband as a result of such a matter. She looked forward to Thy mercy upon him, that he might become chaste as a believer in Thee.

Moreover, though he was outstanding for his kindness, he was also quick to anger. But, she had learned not to oppose an angry husband, either by action or even by word. Eventually, she would observe that his mood had changed and become tranquil, whereupon she would seize the opportune moment to explain her action to him, if, by chance, he had been thoughtlessly disturbed. In short, while many matrons whose husbands were of milder disposition bore the marks of beatings, even in the form of facial disfigurement, and during friendly conversations they criticized the behavior of their husbands, she criticized their talkativeness, seriously re-

74 Cf. Eph. 5.21.
75 Her husband, Patricius, was a pagan for many years.

minding them, but as if it were a joke, that from the time that they had heard the reading of those contracts which are called matrimonial, they should have considered them as legal forms by which they had become slaves; accordingly, being mindful of their condition, they ought not to be haughty in relation to their lords. When they expressed amazement, knowing as they did what a bad-tempered husband she put up with, that there had never been any rumor or indication to suggest that Patricius[76] had beaten his wife, or that they had quarrelsomely disagreed with each other, even for one day, they asked in a friendly manner for an explanation and she told them her way of getting along, which I have noted above. Those who adopted it were grateful as a result of their own experience; those who did not observe it continued to be annoyed at their subjugation.

(20) At first, too, her mother-in-law was stirred up against her by the whisperings of badly disposed servant-girls. But, she persevered in showing marks of respect, and this won her over by patience and gentleness, with the result that her mother-in-law spontaneously revealed to her son the meddling tongues of the servants, by whom the domestic tranquility between herself and her daughter-in-law was disturbed, and she expressed her desire that they be punished. So, after this, acting in obedience to his mother, in consideration of good order in the family and with concern for the harmony of them all, he had the culprits punished by whipping, in accordance with the recommendation of their denouncer. She promised

76 In a recent work (R. Pottier, *S. Augustin le Berbère* [Paris 1945]) the thesis is maintained that Augustine's family is completely indigenous to North Africa. This is quite possible; in fact, there is no real evidence for the contention of many biographers that Patricius was of Roman descent. Many Africans took Roman names. However, Pottier's arguments are more the product of ethnic enthusiasm than scholarship. Cf. A. Dyroff's note on Augustine's parentage, in L. Schopp, *Aurelius Augustinus Selbstgespräche* (München 1938) 114-118.

that like reward should be anticipated by anyone who said anything bad to her about her daughter-in-law, in order to incur her favor. After that, no one made another attempt, and they lived together in a remarkably pleasant state of good will.

(21) Thou hast also given to this good bondswoman of Thine, in whose womb Thou didst create me, O my God, my Mercy,[77] the great capacity of serving, whenever possible, as a peacemaker between whatever souls were in disagreement and discord. Thus, when she heard from both parties a good many very bitter remarks about each other—the sort of things which bloated and undigested discord usually vomits up when the indigestion of hatred belches forth into sour gossip with a present friend about an absent enemy—she would not reveal anything about one to the other, unless it would be useful in reconciling them.

This would seem but a small good, except that I have had sad experience with countless crowds of people who, through some dreadful and very widespread pestilence of sin, not only run to angry enemies with the statements of their angry enemies, but even add things which were not said. On the contrary, it should be little enough of an obligation for the man who is worthy of his species to refrain from starting or increasing animosities among men by evil talk, if, in fact, one does not even strive to extinguish them by good talk.

Such a person was she, under the influence of Thy teaching as an inner Teacher in the school of her breast.[78]

(22) Eventually, she won her own husband over to Thee, right at the end of his earthly life, and she found no cause for complaint in him when he was now one of the faithful, such as she had borne when he was not yet in the faith. She was

77 Ps. 58.18.
78 This theme of Christ as the Interior Master is developed thoroughly in the dialogue, *De magistro*.

also a servant of Thy servants.[79] Among them, whoever knew her found much reason in her for praising, honoring, and loving Thee, for one felt Thy presence in her heart through the fruitful evidence of her saintly manner of life.[80] She had been the wife of but one man,[81] had made some return to her parents, had managed her own household in piety, and possessed a reputation for good works. She had brought up her children, being in labor with them[82] each time that she saw them wandering away from Thee. Finally, O Lord, she took such care of all of us, whom in Thy bounty Thou dost permit me to call Thy servants—for, before she went to her rest in Thee we were already living in a group after receiving the grace of Thy baptism—that it was almost as if she were a mother to us all, and she served us in such a way that it was as if she were the daughter of us all.

Chapter 10

(23) When the day on which she was to depart from this life was near at hand (Thou knewest the day; we did not), I believe it happened by Thy management, in Thy hidden ways, that she and I were standing alone, leaning on a window[83] from which the garden inside the house[84] we occupied could be viewed. It was at Ostia on the Tiber, where,

---

79 Cf. Gen. 9.25.

80 Monica is recognized as a saint in Catholic tradition; it is clear that she was so regarded by her son. Other examples of Augustine's esteem, which go beyond mere filial piety, are to be found in *De ordine* 2.1 and *De beata vita* 1.10.

81 For the special position of widows in the early Church, cf. 1 Tim. 5.3-16, phrases from which are here quoted.

82 Cf. Gal. 4.19.

83 The painting of this scene by Ary Scheffer (Louvre) has often been reproduced.

84 This was a garden in a courtyard, or peristyle.

far removed from the crowds after the hardship of a long journey,[85] we were resting in preparation for the sea voyage.

We were talking to each other alone,[86] very sweetly, 'forgetting what is behind, straining forward to what is before.'[87] Between us, 'in the present truth,'[88] which Thou art, we tried to find out what the eternal life of the saints would be, which 'eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor hast it entered into the heart of man.'[89] But, we also yearned with the mouth of our heart for the supernal flood from 'Thy Fountain, the Fountain of Life which is with Thee,'[90] so that, having been sprinkled from it as much as our capacity would permit, we might think in some way about such a great thing.

(24) When our talk had reached the conclusion that the greatest delight of the bodily senses, in the brightest bodily light, was not capable of comparison with the joy of that life and, moreover, did not seem worthy of being mentioned, then, lifting ourselves up in the yet greater ardor of our feeling toward the Selfsame,[91] we advanced step by step through all bodily things up to the sky itself, from which the sun, moon, and stars shine out over the earth, and we ascended still farther in our interior cogitation, conversation, and admiration of Thy works and came to our own minds.

Then, we transcended them, so that we might touch that

85 The overland trip from Milan to Rome was no doubt a fatiguing journey.

86 Ch. 10, nn. 23-26, describes the much discussed ecstasy at Ostia. For a brief analysis of its philosophical implications, cf. Cayré, *Initiation* 170-173; the same author has made one of the best studies of its spiritual significance, in *La contemplation augustinienne* (Paris 1927) 209-212. Cf. also C. Boyer, 'La contemplation d'Ostie,' *Cahiers de la nouv. journée* 18 (Paris 1930) 137-161. With particular reference to the Plotinian source of the language (*Ennead.* 1.6.8-9; 5.1.11), cf. P. Henry, *La vision d'Ostie* (Paris 1938).

87 Phil. 3.13.

88 2 Peter 1.12.

89 1 Cor. 2.9.

90 Ps. 35.10.

91 *id ipsum*: cf. above, Bk. 9 n. 46.

realm of unfailing abundance in which Thou feedest Israel eternally on the food of truth.[92] There, life is wisdom, through which all these things come into being, both those which have been and those which will be. Yet, it is not made, but is as it was, and thus it will be forever. Or, rather, to have been in the past, or to be in the future, do not pertain to it, but simply *to be,* for it is eternal. To be in the past, or to be in the future, is not to be eternal.

And, while we are so speaking and panting for it, we did touch[93] it a little, with an all-out thrust of our hearts. We sighed and left behind 'the first fruits of the spirit'[94] which were bound there, and we came back to the clattering of our mouths, where the spoken word has its beginning and end. How is it like Thy Word, our Lord, 'remaining ageless in Itself and renewing all things'?[95]

(25) We were saying then: 'Suppose, for any person, that the tumult of the flesh be silenced—silenced, the images of earth and water and air; silenced, the very heavens; silenced, his very soul unto himself, then, if he pass beyond himself, ceasing to think of himself by means of images[96]—silenced, his dreams and imaginary apparitions, every tongue and every sign, and whatever comes to be by transition, if he be granted this complete silence (since, if one can hear, all these things are saying: "We did not make ourselves, but He Who endureth forever made us"[97])—and if, having said this, they become quiet, once they have lifted up his ear to Him who made them; then, if He alone speak, not through

92 Cf. Ezech. 34.13-14; Ps. 77.71.
93 *attingimus*: this reading has the strongest Ms. tradition, and it is taken as a historical present.
94 Rom. 8.23.
95 Cf. Wisd. 7.27: 'remaining in herself the same, she [wisdom] renewed all things.'
96 Literally: 'by not cogitating on himself.'
97 Ps. 99.3-5.

them, but through Himself, so that we might hear His Word, not through fleshly speech, or through the voice of an angel, or through the crash of thunder, or through the darkness of a similitude,[98] but *Himself* whom we love in these things—and if we might hear Him, without these things, just as now we reached out and, with the speed of thought, touched the Eternal Wisdom abiding above all things—and if this could continue, and other visions of a much lower type were taken away, and this one vision were to enrapture, absorb, and enclose its beholder in inner joys, so that life might forever be like that instant of understanding, for which we had sighed, then surely, this is the meaning of: "Enter into the joy of Thy Master"?[99] When will this be? Perhaps, when "we shall all rise but shall not all be changed"?'[100]

(26) Such things I was saying, though not in this way, or in these words.[101] Nevertheless, O Lord Thou knowest that, on that day when we were conversing on such things, and this world with all its pleasures became, as we were speaking, contemptible to us, she said these words: 'Son, for myself, I find no pleasure, now, in anything in this life. What I am doing here, now, and why I am here, I do not know; my hope for this world is already fufilled. There was but one thing for which I yearned to remain a little longer in this life. That was to see you a Catholic Christian before I died. My God has more abundantly satisfied my desire, inasmuch as I see you now, having spurned earthly felicity, become His servant. What am I doing here?'

98 Cf. 1 Cor. 13.12.
99 Matt. 25.21-23.
100 1 Cor. 15.51.
101 Actually, the words in the reported conversation are at times very similar to passages in the *Enneads* of Plotinus. It is probable that Augustine, who seems to have had a wonderful memory, used the language of Plotinus without being wholly conscious of the fact.

Chapter 11

(27) What I said to her, in answer to these words, I do not sufficiently recall. For, within a period of scarcely five days, or not much more, she took to her bed with a fever. As she grew worse, she slipped into unconsciousness one day and was withdrawn for a little while from the things about her. We hastily gathered about her, but she returned to consciousness quickly and looked at me and my brother[102] as we stood by. Rather like a person in search of something, she said to us: 'Where am I?' Then, seeing that we were overcome with grief, she said: 'Bury your mother here.' I remained silent and restrained my tears. But my brother said something expressing the wish that she would die a happier death in her homeland rather than in a foreign country. When she heard this, her countenance was disturbed, and she chided him with her eyes because he valued such things. Then, looking at me, she said: 'See how he talks.' Soon after, she addressed us both: 'Bury this body anywhere. Let its care give you no concern. One thing only do I ask of you,[103] that you remember me at the altar of the Lord, wherever you may be.' When she had made this decision clear, with the words that she could manage, she fell silent and was worn out by her increasing illness.

(28) But, thinking over Thy gifts, O Invisible God,[104] which Thou dost infuse into the hearts of Thy faithful, and that wonderful fruits spring from them, I rejoiced and gave thanks to Thee,[105] remembering what I had known of the great concern which she had exhibited in regard to the burial place which she had arranged and prepared for herself

102 Navigius, who had joined Augustine in Milan.
103 Monica simply asked her son to pray for her whenever he went to church.
104 Col. 1.15.
105 Cf. Col. 1.3.

beside the body of her husband. Because they had lived quite peacefully together, she also desired (for the human mind is least able to grasp divine things) that this be added to her happiness and be remembered by men, that it had been granted her, after her voyage across the sea, to have the earthly remains of both spouses united under the same earth.

But, when this empty folly[106] had begun to disappear from her heart, through the fullness of Thy goodness, I did not know, but I was joyful with wonder at what she had thus disclosed to me. Yet, during that talk of ours at the window, when she said: 'What am I doing here now?' she did not seem to want to die in her own country. Later, I also heard that, during the time we were at Ostia, she had talked, one day when I was absent, with maternal confidence to some of my friends about the contempt for this life and the value of death—and, when they were amazed at the strong-mindedness of the woman (which Thou hadst given her) and when they asked whether she had no fear of leaving her body so far away from her own city, she replied: 'Nothing is far from God, and there should be no fear that He will not know from whence to resurrect me at the end of time.'

And so, on the ninth day of her illness, in her fifty-sixth year and my thirty-third year, this religious and holy soul was loosed from the body.[107]

Chapter 12

(29) I pressed her eyes closed, and a huge wave of sorrow flooded my heart and flowed outward in tears, yet at the same time my eyes, under the forceful command of the

106 For Augustine's views on burial and proper care for the bodies, and souls, of the dead, cf. *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, written c. 420.

107 An important text in the chronology of Augustine's life; Monica died in 387.

mind, repressed their flow until they were quite dry. In such a struggle, I felt very bad. When she breathed her last breath, the boy, Adeodatus, cried out in lamentation; then, restrained by all of us, he became silent. In this way, too, my boyish tendency to lapse into tears was restrained by a youthful voice, the voice of the heart, and it was silent. For, we did not think it appropriate to mark this funeral with sorrowful tears and ejaculations: that was the usual custom in mourning the unhappy lot of the dead, or their complete extinction. But, she did not die unhappily, nor did she die altogether. We had good reasons for assurance on this point, both from the evidence of her way of living and from her 'faith unfeigned.'[108]

(30) What, then, was it which caused grievous pain within me, if not the fresh wound arising from the sudden breaking of a very sweet and cherished habit of living together? I was gladdened indeed by her statement, when during her last illness she mixed her caresses with my acts of caring for her, and called me a loving son, mentioning with a great emotion of love that she had never heard a harsh word directed against her by me, or any sound of abuse. Yet, what comparison, O my God who hast made us, what comparison can there be between the respect which I showed her and the slavery she endured for me? Since I was thus bereft of such great comfort from her, my soul was wounded and it was as if the life which had been made one from hers and mine were torn to shreds.

(31) When the boy, then, had been checked in his weeping, Evodius took up the Book of Psalms and began to chant the psalm, 'Mercy and judgment I will sing to Thee, O Lord,'[109] and our whole household answered him. Having heard what was going on, many brethren and religious

108 1 Tim. 1.5.
109 Ps. 100.1.

women gathered, and, while they whose function it was took charge of the funeral, as was the custom, I discoursed in another part of the house, where I could do so fittingly, with those who felt that they should not leave me, on a subject appropriate to the occasion. By this balm of truth, I softened the torment which was known to Thee but not to them, and they listened carefully and thought that I was without any sense of sorrow. But I, before Thy ears, where none of them could hear, rebuked the tenderness of my feeling and suppressed the flow of grief. It gave way before me, a little; again, it returned in its violent flood, but not enough to overflow in tears, or in any change of my countenance. But, I knew what I was suppressing in my heart. Because I was strongly displeased that these human things had so much power over me, things which in due order and by the lot of our state of life must occur, I suffered still another sorrow at my sorrow and was afflicted with a twofold grief.

(32) When the body[110] was carried to the grave, we went, we returned—without tears. Nor during those prayers which we poured out before Thee, when the sacrifice of our redemption[111] was offered for her, as the corpse was placed beside the grave before being buried, as was customary there—nor during those prayers did I weep. But, throughout the day, I suffered heavy grief within me and, in the turmoil of my mind, I besought Thee, in so far as I could, to heal my sorrow. Yet, Thou didst not do it, commending to my memory, I believe, by this one proof the binding force of all habit, even in relation to a mind which is now fed on no

---

110 St. Monica's body remained at Ostia until 1430, when Pope Martin V had it placed in the church of Sant'Agostino in Rome. In December, 1947, the *Osservatore Romano* reported the discovery of a marble slab bearing an inscription which may have been placed on the tomb of St. Monica. This slab was found in the yard of the church of St. Aurea at Ostia. Cf. R. Arbesmann, 'A Lucky Archaeological Find,' *The Classical Bulletin,* 23 (1946) 9ff.

111 In *Serm.* 172.2.2, Augustine fully explains his belief that the dead are assisted by prayers and the sacrifice of the Mass in their behalf.

deceiving word. It seemed to me then that I should go and bathe, for I had heard that the word for baths [*balneum*] has its origin in the fact that the Greeks say *balaneîon,* that which drives anxiety from the mind.[112] Now, I confess this, too, to Thy mercy, 'O Father of orphans,'[113] for I bathed, and was in just the same condition as I had been before bathing. The bitterness of my grief did not flow off in sweat from my heart.

Then I slept, awakened, and found that my sorrow was softened not a little. As I lay alone in my bed, I recalled the veracious verses of Thy Ambrose[114]: Thou art indeed,

O God, who hast created all,
The Ruler of the earth's twin poles;
Who garbs the day with glowing light,
The night with grateful sleep;

May He lift up tired limbs set free,
That rest to labor's use restore,
And may He lift our wearied minds
Resolving troublous griefs.

(33) Then, by degrees, I recovered my former way of thinking of Thy handmaiden and her holy behavior in regard to Thee, along with her saintly kindness and benevolence toward us, of which I was suddenly bereft. It was a relief to weep in Thy sight about her and for her, about myself and for myself. I gave free course to the tears which I was still restraining, permitting them to flow as fully as they wished, spreading them out as a pillow for my heart. It rested on them, for they were shed in the presence of Thine

112 Like most ancient etymologies, this derivation is probably inaccurate; cf. Campbell-McGuire 188 n. 197.
113 Ps. 67.6.
114 For the hymns of St. Ambrose, with commentary, cf. A. S. Walpole, *Early Latin Hymns* (Cambridge 1922).

ears, not of some man who would regard my weeping with scorn.

And now, O Lord, I am confessing to Thee in writing. Let him who wishes read and interpret it as he wishes. If he finds it a sin that I wept for my mother during a little part of an hour, the mother who was dead for the time being to my eyes, who had wept over me for many years that I might live before Thy eyes—let him not be scornful; rather, if he is a person of great charity, let him weep himself for my sins, before Thee, the Father of all the brethren of Thy Christ.

Chapter 13

(34) Now that my heart has been healed of that wound, in which one might criticize the element of bodily emotion, I pour out unto Thee, our God, a far different kind of tears for that handmaid of Thine. This flows from a spirit struck by the consideration of the dangers of every soul which dies in Adam.[115] True, she had been made to live in Christ,[116] even before her departure from the flesh, and had lived in such a way that Thy Name would be praised in her faith and in her actions. However, I do not venture to say that, from the moment that Thou didst regenerate her through baptism, no word in opposition to Thy commandment issued from her mouth. It has been said by the Truth, by Thy Son: 'if any man says to his brother, thou fool, he shall be liable to the fire of Gehenna':[117] and woe even to the praiseworthy life of men, if Thou scrutinize it when mercy has been set aside! Because, in truth, Thou dost not examine failings with severity, we confidently hope for a place in Thy presence.

115 Cf. 1 Cor. 15.22.
116 *Ibid.*
117 Matt. 5.22-23.

Now, whoever reckons his true merits before Thee, what does he reckon but Thy gifts? Oh, if men might know themselves as men, and that 'he who boasts might boast in the Lord.'[118]

(35) And so, my Praise[119] and my Life, God of my heart,[120] having set aside her good actions for a little while, for which in my joy I give thanks to Thee, I now pray to Thee for the sins of my mother. Hear me through the Remedy of our wounds, who hung upon the Cross, and who, sitting at Thy right hand, intercedes with Thee for us.[121] I know that she acted mercifully and from her heart, 'forgave her debtors their debts':[122] do Thou also forgive her her debts, if she contracted any during the many years following the water of salvation.[123] Forgive her, O Lord, forgive her, I implore, 'and enter not into judgment with her.'[124] 'Let mercy triumph over judgment,'[125] for Thy pronouncements are true and Thou hast promised mercy to the merciful.[126] That they were such is due to Thy gift, who 'wilt have mercy on whom Thou hast mercy, and wilt show compassion to whom Thou hast been compassionate.'[127]

(36) And I believe that Thou wilt have already done what I am asking, but accept, O Lord, 'the free offerings of my mouth.'[128] Indeed, when the day of her dissolution was near hand,[129] she did not think of her body being sumptuously garbed or embalmed with spices, nor desire a choice monument, nor was she concerned about a tomb in her homeland.

118 2 Cor. 10.17.
119 Cf. Ps. 117.14.
120 Ps. 72.26.
121 Cf. Rom. 8.34.
122 Cf. Matt. 6.12.
123 I.e., after baptism.
124 Ps. 142.2.
125 Cf. James 2.13.
126 Cf. Matt. 5.7.
127 Cf. Rom. 9.15.
128 Ps. 118.108.
129 Cf. 2 Tim. 4.6.

She did not ask us for such things, but simply requested that remembrance be made for her at Thy altar, which she had attended without missing a single day.[130] She knew that on it the Holy Victim is offered; by means of which 'the decree against us, which was hostile to us,'[131] is cancelled; by means of which the Enemy, adding up our offenses and seeking something to charge against us, and finding nothing[132] in Him in whom we conquer, was overcome.

Who shall restore to Him His innocent Blood? Who shall return to Him the price by which He bought us, in order to take us away from Him? To this sacrament of our redemption Thy handmaid bound her soul with the bond of faith. Let no one break it loose from Thy protection. Let neither 'the lion nor the dragon'[133] interpose himself by force, or by wiles: nor will she answer that she owes nothing, lest she be convicted and seized by the crafty complainant; rather will she answer that her debts are forgiven by Him to whom no one can make restitution of what He, who is not a debtor, paid for us.

(37) May she be in peace, then, along with the husband, before whom and after whom she was married to no man, whom she obeyed, bearing fruit for Thee with patience,[134] that she might also win him for Thee.[135] And inspire, O my Lord, my God, inspire Thy servants, my brethren, Thy children, my masters, those whom I serve with heart and voice and pen, so that, as many as read these words may remember at Thy altar Thy servant Monica, and Patricius her onetime spouse, those through whose flesh Thou didst introduce me to

130 Cf. above, 5.9.17.
131 Col. 2.14.
132 John 14.30.
133 Cf. Ps. 90.13.
134 Cf. Luke 8.15.
135 Cf. 1 Peter 3.1.

this life, I know not how.[136] May they remember with holy feeling my parents in this transitory light, and my brethren under Thee, O Father, in our Catholic Mother,[137] and my fellow citizens in the eternal Jerusalem,[138] for which the pilgrimage of Thy people sighs from the start until the return. In this way, her last request of me will be more abundantly granted her in the prayers of many through these my confessions than through my own prayers.

136 Augustine never was able to clarify this point; he remained uncertain as to the manner in which the individual human soul comes into being. Cf. *De anima et ejus origine,* written in 419.

137 The Church.

138 Heaven.

BOOK TEN

Chapter 1

'I SHALL KNOW THEE,' O Knower of mine, 'I shall know Thee even as I have been known.'[1] Virtue of my soul, go deep into it and make it fit for Thee, that Thou mayset have and possess it 'without spot or wrinkle.'[2] This is my hope and that is why I speak, and in this 'hope I rejoice,'[3] when my joy is sound. As for the other things of this life: the more tears they receive, the less are they deserving of tears; the less tears are shed over them, the more do they deserve tears. 'For behold Thou hast loved truth,'[4] since 'he who does the truth, comes to the light.'[5] I desire to do this in my heart, before Thee in confession; and in my writing, before many witnesses.

1 1 Cor. 13.12.
2 Eph. 5.27.
3 Cf. Rom. 12.12.
4 Ps. 50.8.
5 John 3.21.

Chapter 2

(2) Even if I were unwilling to confess unto Thee, what could be hidden in me from Thee, O Lord, to whose eyes the abyss of human conscience is naked?[6] I should but hide Thee from myself, not myself from Thee. Now, indeed, that my groaning is a witness that I am displeased with myself, Thou art refulgent, pleasing, lovable and desirable, that I may be ashamed of myself, reject myself and choose Thee, and that I may be pleasing neither to Thee nor myself, except on account of Thee.

Before Thee, then, O Lord, I lie unconcealed, whatever I may be. Yet, I have already said what is the fruit of my confessing to Thee. Nor am I doing it with fleshly words and speech, but with the words of the soul and the clamor of cogitation, which Thy ear doth recognize. For, when I am bad, to confess to Thee is nothing but to be displeased with myself; when I am good, to confess to Thee is simply not to attribute this to myself. For, Thou, O Lord, dost bless the just[7] man, but first Thou dost rectify him from his impiety.[8] And so, my confession, O my God, is made silently to Thee in Thy sight, yet not silently. It is silent in relation to noise, but, in the sphere of feeling, it cries aloud. Nor do I say any right thing to men which Thou hast not heard before from me, nor dost Thou hear any such thing from me which Thou hast not previously said to me.

6 Cf. Heb. 4.13.
7 Cf. Ps. 5.13.
8 Cf. Rom. 4.5. For Augstine rectification, or justification, is God's act of making an unworthy man righteous.

Chapter 3

(3) But, what business have I with men that they should hear my confessions, as if they could become the healers 'of all my diseases?'[9] A race interested in finding out about the other man's life, slothful in amending their own! Why do they seek to hear from me what I am, when they do not wish to hear from Thee what they are? And how do they know whether I am telling the truth when they hear about me from myself, since no one 'among men knows what goes on in a man, save the spirit of the man which is in him?'[10] But, if they hear about themselves from Thee, they cannot say: 'the Lord is lying.' For, what is it to hear about oneself from Thee, but to know oneself? Who, then, can know himself and say: 'It it false,' unless he himself lies? But, because 'charity believes all things,'[11] certainly among those whom it makes one, in intimate union with each other, I, also, O Lord, do even confess to Thee in such a way that men may hear, though I cannot prove to them that the things I confess are true. But, they whose ears charity doth open unto me, they believe me.

(4) Do Thou, however, my inner Physician, make clear to me with what profit I am doing these things. For, the confessions of my past evils (which Thou hast 'forgiven and covered up,'[12] so that Thou mightest make me blessed in Thee, changing my soul by faith and Thy Sacrament) may, when they are read and heard, excite the heart so that it will not lie in a torpor of despair and say: 'I cannot,' but will rather wake up in the love of Thy mercy and in the sweetness of Thy grace, whereby every weak man is made strong,[13] provided he becomes aware through it of his own weakness.

9 Ps. 102.3.
10 Cf. 1 Cor. 2.11.
11 Cf. 1 Cor. 13.7.
12 Cf. Ps. 31.1.
13 Cf. 2 Cor. 12.10.

It is a joy for good men to hear of the past evils of those who are now free from them; not that joy arises from the fact that there are evils, but from the fact that they were, but do not now exist.

With what profit, therefore, O my Lord, to whom my conscience confesses daily, being more secure in the hope of Thy mercy than in its own innocence—with what profit, I ask, do I also confess to men through these writings, in Thy presence, not what I have been, but what I am. Now, the profit of confessing of the past I have observed and noted. Yet, what I now am, right at this very time of my confessions, many people desire to know, both those who know me and those who do not. They have heard something from me or about me, but their ear is not close to my heart, where I am whatever I am. They wish, then, to hear me confessing what I am within myself, where neither eye nor ear nor mind can reach in; they wish this as believers, for how could they know it?[14] Charity, whereby they are good, tells them that I do not lie in confessing about myself, and it, being present in them, believes me.

Chapter 4

(5) But, to what profit do they wish this? Do they desire to join me in giving thanks, when they hear how near I approach Thee through Thy grace, and to pray for me, when they hear how much I am retarded by my own weight? I will reveal myself to such people. For, it is no small profit, O Lord my God, that 'thanks will be given by many on our behalf,'[15] and that Thou shouldst be implored by many for our sake.

---

14 On the Augustinian distinction between belief and knowledge, cf. *Contra acad.* 3.20.43, and *Augustine's Quest of Wisdom* 119-120.
15 2 Cor. 1.11.

Let the brotherly mind love in me what Thou dost teach to be worthy of love, and lament in me what Thou dost teach to be worthy of lament.

Let the mind doing this be brotherly, not alien, not 'of strange children, whose mouth hath spoken vanity: and their right hand the right hand of iniquity,'[16] but a brotherly one which, approving me, rejoices for me, disapproving me, becomes sad for me, because, whether approving or disapproving me, it loves me. To such people, I will reveal myself. Let them breathe easily over my good deeds, breathe anxiously over my evil ones. My good deeds are Thy arrangements and Thy gifts; my evil ones are my own offenses and Thy judgments. Let them breathe easily over the former and anxiously over the latter, and let hymns and weeping ascend in Thy sight from brotherly hearts, Thy censers.[17] But do Thou, O Lord, delighted with the scent of Thy holy temple, 'have mercy on me according to Thy great mercy'[18] because of Thy Name, and, in no wise forsaking Thy undertakings, bring my imperfections to perfection.

(6) This is the fruit of my confessions, that I should confess, not what kind of man I was, but what kind I am; and this, not only before Thee in hidden rejoicing with trembling,[19] and in hidden grief with hope, but even unto the ears of believers among the sons of men, of the companions of my joy and the colleagues of my mortality, of my fellow citizens and the pilgrims in my company, those who have gone before and those who go after, and those who share my company on the way.[20] These are Thy servants, my brethren, whom

16 Ps. 143.7-8.

17 Apoc. 8.3. The imagery suggests that the hearts of charitable men waft incense up to God.

18 Ps. 50.3.

19 Ps. 2.11.

20 That man on earth is but a pilgrim is a familiar theme in patristic literature; cf. 2 Cor. 5.6.

Thou didst desire as Thy sons, my masters, whom Thou didst command me to serve, provided I wish to live with Thee and from Thee. And this Word of Thine would amount to little, if it prescribed to me by words only and did not first lead the way by deeds. I serve these men by words and deeds; I do so 'under Thy wings,'[21] with every great risk, except for the fact that my soul is protected under Thy wings and my weakness is known to Thee. I am very little, but my Father lives forever and My Protector is adequate for me. For He is the same Being, He who has generated me and who protects me. Thou Thyself art all my goods, Thou omnipotent Being who art with me even before I am with Thee. So, I will reveal myself to such men, the kind whom Thou hast commanded me to serve—showing not what I was, but what I now am, and what I am still. However, 'I do not even judge myself.'[22]

Thus, then, may I be heard.

Chapter 5

(7) For it is Thou, O Lord, who dost judge me. Because, though no one 'knows the things of a man save the spirit of the man which is in him,'[23] there is nevertheless something in a man which even the very spirit of the man does not know which is in him; but Thou, O Lord, knowest all about him, Thou who hast made him. In fact, though I despise myself before Thy sight and consider myself but earth and ashes, yet I do know something about Thee which I do not know about myself. Truly, 'we see now through a mirror in an obscure manner,' not yet 'face to face.'[24] And so, as long as I am a wanderer away from Thee, I am more present

21 Ps. 35.8.
22 1 Cor. 4.3.
23 1 Cor. 2.11.
24 1 Cor. 13.12.

to myself than to Thee, and yet I know that Thou canst in no way be affected from without. But, in fact, I do not know what temptations I may be strong enough to resist and what ones I cannot. Yet, there is hope, for Thou 'art faithful, Thou wilt not permit us to be tempted beyond what we can bear, rather Thou wilt also with the temptation provide a way out that we may be able to bear it.'[25]

Therefore, I will confess what I know of myself and what I do not know of myself, since even what I do know about myself I know by virtue of Thy enlightenment of me, and what I do not know about myself I remain ignorant of, until my 'darkness shall become as the noonday'[26] in Thy sight.

Chapter 6

(8) I love Thee, O Lord, not with doubtful but with assured awareness.[27] Thou hast pierced my heart with Thy Word and I have loved Thee. The heaven and earth, also, and all things which are in them, see how, on all sides, they tell me to love Thee. Nor do they cease to tell this to all men 'that they may be without excuse.'[28] More profoundly, however, 'wilt Thou have mercy on whom Thou wilt have mercy, and wilt Thou show pity, to whom Thou wilt show pity:'[29] otherwise, heaven and earth speak Thy praises to the deaf.

But, what do I love, when I love Thee? Not the prettiness of a body, not the gracefulness of temporal rhythm, not the brightness of light (that friend of these eyes), not the sweet

25 Cf. 1 Cor. 10.13. Augustine seems to have known several versions of this text; for two variant ones, cf. *Enarr. in ps.* 94.9; and *Enarr. in ps.* 61.20.

26 Isa. 58.10.

27 On this whole passage (Chs. 6-27) describing the soul's search for God, consult Cayré, *Initiation* 173-175.

28 Rom. 1.20.

29 Cf. Rom. 9.15.

melodies of songs in every style, not the fragrance of flowers and ointments and spices, not manna and honey, not limbs which can be grasped in fleshly embraces—these I do not love, when I love my God. Yet, I do love something like a light, a voice, an odor, food, an embrace, when I love my God—the light, voice, odor, food, embrace of my inner man,[30] wherein for my soul a light shines, and place does not encompass it, where there is a sound which time does not sweep away, where there is a fragrance which the breeze does not disperse, where there is a flavor which eating does not diminish, and where there is a clinging which satiety does not disentwine. This is what I love, when I love my God.

(9) And what is this?

I asked the earth, [31] and it answered: 'It is not I.' Whatever things are in it uttered the same confession. I asked the sea, the depths, the creeping things among living animals, and they replied: 'We are not Thy God; look above us.' I asked the airy breezes, and the whole atmosphere with its inhabitants said: 'Anaximenes[32] is mistaken; I am not God.' I asked the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars: 'Nor are we the God whom you seek,' they said. And I said to all these things which surround the entryways of my flesh: 'Tell me about my God, since you are not He; tell me something about Him.' With a loud voice, they cried out: 'He made us.'[33] My interrogation

30 For the distinction between *homo exterior* (man as an animated body, looking toward the bodily objects of sense perception, having functions common with those of brute animals) and the *homo interior* (man as a *mens,* exercising spiritual functions like those of the angels) , cf. *De Trin.* 12.1.1

31 The step-by-step advance, from things of sense, through the mind, to the Wisdom of the one God, is Neo-Platonic in method; cf. Plotinus, *Ennead.* 5.1.4.

32 Anaximenes (one of the first Greek philosophers, fl. 530 B.C., at Miletus) thought that air, or atmosphere, is the one, original material of all things, and that it is quasi-divine. His theory was probably known to Augustine through Cicero, *De natura deorum* 1.26, rather than Plutarch, *De plac. phil.* 1.36, as Gibb-Montgomery (*Conf.* 279) suggest.

33 Ps. 99.3.

was my looking upon them, and their reply was their beauty.

Then, I turned to myself and said: 'Who art thou?' And I answered: 'A man.' Here are the body and soul in me, standing ready to serve me; the one without, the other within. From which of these should I have sought my God, whom I had already sought in the realm of body from earth to sky, as far as I could send out the messenger rays[34] of my eyes? But, the better is what is interior. To it, indeed, as to an overseer and judge, all the messengers of the body send back their messages concerning the answers of heaven and earth, and all things in them, which say: 'We are not God,' and: 'He has made us.' The interior man knows these things through the help of the exterior man; I, the interior man knew these things, I, I, the mind through the senses of my body. I asked the whole frame of the world concerning my God and it replied to me: 'I am not He, but He has made me.'

(10) Is not this beauty evident to all whose sense perception is intact? Why does it not speak the same thing to all men? Tiny and large animals see it, but they cannot interrogate it—for reason is not placed above the message-carrying senses in them, as a judge. But, men are able to ask, so that 'they may clearly see the invisible attributes of God, being understood through the things that are made,[35] but through love they are made subject to these things and, being thus subjected, are not able to judge.[36] These things do not reply to questioners unless these latter are capable of judging. Not that they change their voice, that is, their beautiful appearance,

34 Like many ancient thinkers, particularly in the Platonic tradition, Augustine thought that the eyes are possessed of their own light, which is sent out as rays to touch upon the surfaces of objects of vision. Cf. *Sermo* 277.10.10.

35 Cf. Rom. 1.20.

36 Note the emphasis on the function of judgment. E. Gilson (*Introd. à l'étude de s. Augustin* 124) considers judgment the focal point for the application of the theory of divine illumination in the human soul. Cayré (*Initiation* 234-243) seems to identify illumination with spiritual intuition.

if one being simply sees, while another sees and interrogates, so that it appears one way to the first and another way to the second—but, appearing just the same to both, it is mute to one, while it speaks to the other. Rather, it speaks to all, but the latter understand, for they take in its voice from outside and compare it with the truth within. Now, the truth says to me: 'Thy God is neither sky, nor earth, nor any body.' This, their own nature states. Men see:[37] it is a thing with bulk, smaller in its part than its whole. Now, you are better—I am talking to you, my soul—since you activate the bulk of your body, giving it life, which no body confers on a body. God, however, is even for you the Life of life.[38]

Chapter 7

(11) What, then, do I love, when I love my God? Who is He, above the head of my soul? I shall go up through my soul itself to Him. I shall pass beyond my life-force, whereby I cling to the body and fill its frame with life. I do not find my God by that force, for 'the horse and the mule, who have no understanding,'[39] would find it likewise, since it is the same force by which their bodies also live.

There is another force, by which I not only vivify but also sensify[40] my flesh which the Lord has framed for me, commanding the eye not to hear, the ear not to see, but assigning to the former through which I may see and to the latter

37 *vident*: this, Skutella's reading, was adopted eariler by Knöll and Gibb-Montgomery; De Labriolle and the Benedictine text have *videnti*.

38 See an excellent English version of sections 9-10, and a discussion of this text, in Pegis, 'The Mind of St. Augustine,' *Mediaeval Studies* 6 (1944) 45-46.

39 Ps. 31.9.

40 *sensifico*: possibly first used by Augustine. The English form, 'sensify,' has no dictionary authority, but its meaning is clear (to render capable of sensation) and it brings out the analogy with 'vivify' without the use of a periphrastic construction.

through which I may hear and to the other senses, according to their organs and functions, their proper objects respectively.[41] I, being one mind, do these different things through them. I shall also pass above this force of mine, for the horse and mule have this, too; they also sense through the body.

Chapter 8

(12) So, I shall also pass above this power of my nature, ascending by degrees toward Him who made me, and I come into the fields and broad palaces of memory,[42] where there are treasures of innumerable images, brought in from all sorts of sense objects. There is stored away whatever we cogitate on, too, either by adding to, or taking away from, or changing in any way the things which sense perception has contacted, and anything else kept or put back there, which forgetfulness has not yet engrossed and buried.

When I am in it, I can request that whatever I wish be brought forward. Some things come forth immediately; others are hunted after for a longer time, yet they are dug out as it were from some more concealed containers; still others rush out in a mob, when something else is sought and looked for, jumping forth in the middle as if to say: 'Would we do, perhaps?' These I drive away from the face of my remembrance with the hand of my heart, until what I want becomes clear and enters into sight from the secret places. Other things come up as they are required, in easy and uninterrupted sequence. The first ones give way to those which follow and, in leaving,

41 Cf. Cicero, *De acad.* 2.10.

42 For a thorough analysis of this passage on memory, cf. G. Söhngen, 'Der Aufbau der augustinischen Gedächtnislehre, Conf. X, 6-27,' *Aurelius Augustinus* (Köln 1930) 385. For other treatments of *memoria,* cf. *De Trin.* 11.11-18; 14:13-16; 15.39-43; *Epist.* 7, *in toto; De mus.* 6.4-6.

are stored up to come forth again when I desire it. All of this goes on, when I recite something memorized.

(13) In it, all things are kept distinct and classified. They are carried in, each by its own channel—light, for instance, and all colors and shapes of bodies through the eyes; through the ears all kinds of sounds; all odors through the channel of the nostrils; all flavors through the channel of the mouth; and then, by the sensitivity of the whole body, what is hard or soft, hot or cold, smooth or rough, heavy or light, whether outside or inside the body. All these the great recess of memory, and its indescribably hidden and mysterious chasms, take in, to be called to mind and reviewed, when need arises. All these things go in, each by its own gateway, and are there stored away. The things themselves do not go in, of course, but the images of sensible things are ready, there, for the cogitation which recalls them.

Just how these are fashioned who can say, though it is evident by which senses they are caught up and stored away within? For, even while I dwell in darkness and silence, I can, if I wish, produce colors in my memory, and distinguish between white and black and between any others as I wish. Nor do sounds rush in and disturb the object drawn in through the eyes, when I am considering it; yet, they are there, also, and lie hidden in separation, as it were. I can summon these, too, if it pleases me, and they are present at once; with tongue at rest and silent throat, I can sing as much as I wish. The images of colors, despite the fact that they are present, do not intervene or break in when another store, which has flowed in through the ears, is reviewed. Thus, I can remember at will the other things which have been taken in and piled up through the other senses. I can distinguish the fragrance of lilies from that of violets, while smelling nothing, and I can prefer honey to a decoction of musk, smooth to rough, and not by tasting or touching anything at the time, but by recollecting.

(14) I do this inside, in the immense palace of my memory. In it, sky, earth, and sea are present before me, together with all the things I could perceive in them, except for those which I have forgotten. In it, I even encounter myself[43] and I bring myself to mind: what, when and where I did something, and how I felt when I did it. In it are all the things which I remember, either those personally experienced or those taken on faith. Out of the same supply, even, I can take now these, now those likenesses of things (whether those experienced or those derived from experience) and combine them with things of the past, and from these I can even think over future actions,[44] happenings, and hopes—and all these, again, as if in the present. 'I shall do this or that,' I say within myself in this huge recess of my mind, filled with the images of things so many and so great, and this or that follows in consequence. 'Oh, if this or that could happen!' 'May God prevent this or that!'—I say these things to myself, and, while I say them, the images of all the things I am saying are present from the same storehouse of memory. I could not say anything at all about them, if they were lacking.

(15) Great is this power of memory, exceeding great, O my God, a vast and unlimited inner chamber. Who has plumbed its depths? Yet, this is a power of my mind and it belongs to my nature; I myself do not grasp all that I am. Is, then, the mind too narrow to hold itself, so that the ques-

---

43 This view, that the human soul is a direct object of knowledge for itself, is one of the cardinal features of Augustinian psychology; cf. B. Romeyer, S. J., *La philosophie chrétienne jusqu'à Descartes* (Paris 1936) 2.146-147.

44 Obviously, Augustine put under *memoria* a large number of functions which St. Thomas attributes to distinct internal senses, and (as will be noted in the ensuing chapters) functions which parallel the retentive *habitus* of the Thomistic sense appetites, will and intellect. Probably the best study yet available of the Augustinian sense functions is W. Ott, 'Des hl. Augustinus Lehre über die Sinneserkenntnis,' *Philos. Jahrbuch* 13 (1900) 45-59; 138-148.

tions arise: Where is this thing which belongs to it, and it cannot grasp? Would it be outside it, and not in it? How, then, does it not grasp it? A mighty wonder rises before me, and on this point astonishment seizes me.

Yet, men go to admire the mountains' peaks, giant waves in the sea, the broad courses of rivers, the vast sweep of the ocean, and the circuits of the stars—and they leave themselves behind! They feel no wonder that I did not see with my eyes all these things when I was talking about them. Yet, I could not have talked of them unless I could see within, in my memory, in their vast expanses, as if I were seeing them externally, the mountains, waves, rivers, and stars which I have seen, and the ocean which I take on faith.[45] Yet, I did not, by vision, take these things into me, when I saw them with my eyes. They are not themselves with me, but just their images. And I know for each what was impressed on me by each sense of the body.

Chapter 9

(16) These are not the only things which the vast capacity of my memory bears. Here, also, are all those things which have been grasped from the liberal disciplines and which have not yet been forgotten—put aside, as it were, in an inner place which is not a place. Nor do I carry the images of these, but the things themselves.[46] For, what literature is, what skill in discussion is, how many kinds of questions there are, whatever things like this I know, are present in my mem-

45 Augustine had seen the Mediterranean, in crossing from Africa to Rome, but he never saw the ocean.

46 Imageless thought, or vision, is another characteristic teaching of Augustine's psychology. Spiritual vision of such objects as the principles of numbering, the virtues, the soul's own acts, the principles of mental judgment, is held to go on without sense imagery. Cf. *De Trin.* 10.10.14; *De Gen. ad. lit.* 12.3.6; 12.10.21.

ory in a special way. I have not left the thing outside and just retained the image—nor has it existed as a sound and then passed away, like a spoken word impressed through the ears, through a vestigial image, by which in recollection it again sounds, as it were, when it is not actually sounding—nor, as an odor, while passing and disappearing on the breezes, affects the sense of smell from which it sends in its image to the memory, for us to recall when remembering—nor, as food, which, of course, causes no taste when already in the stomach, yet is tasted, in a way, in memory—nor, as some object perceived by touching it with the body, which the memory pictures even when it is separated from us. In fact, these things are not introduced into the memory, but their images alone are grasped with marvelous speed, and are put away in wonderful compartments, and come forth in a wondrous way through remembering.

Chapter 10

(17) However, when I hear that there are three kinds of questions—Whether a thing is? What it is? What kind it is?—I keep the images of the sounds by which these words are constituted, of course, and I know that they have passed away through the air, accompanied by noise, and now do not exist. But, the things themselves, which are signified by these sounds, I did not attain by any sense of the body, nor did I see them anywhere else than in my mind; yet, I have stored up in memory, not their image, but the things themselves.

If they can, let them tell me whence these things have come into me. For, I have gone over all the entrances of my flesh and have not found out by which one they came in. Of course, the eyes say: 'If they are colored, we have reported them'; the ears say: 'If they emitted sound, they have been

made known by us'; the nostrils say: 'If they were odorous, they passed through us'; so also the sense of taste says: 'If it is not a matter of taste, do not ask me'; touch says: 'If it has no bodily bulk, I did not touch it; if I did not touch it, I did not make it known.'

From what source, and by what route, did these things enter into my memory? I do not know how. When I learned these things, I did not believe in another man's heart; rather, I recognized them in my own and I approved them as true. I committed them to it as to a repository, from which I could take them out when I desired. Therefore, they were there even before I learned them, but they were not in the memory. Where, then, and why did I know them when they were spoken, saying: 'It is so, it is true,' unless because they were already in memory,[47] but so far removed, buried in its deeper enclosures, that, unless they had been dug out by something that suggested them, I should perhaps have been unable to think them.

Chapter 11

(18) Therefore, we find that to learn things of this kind —whose images we do not acquire through sensation, but which we discern in themselves within us, without images and as they are—is nothing else than, by cogitation, to make a kind of collation of the haphazard and unarranged contents of memory, and, through one's act of awareness, to command

47 Augustine knew the Platonic theory of reminiscence (*Meno* 81D) but had rejected it by the year 389, when (*De magistro* 12.38-40) he replaced any tendency toward innate knowledge, or recollection of experience from a previous 'life,' by introducing the theory of divine illumination. From that point on, Augustine always taught that God teaches man the truth from within his soul: *Ille autem qui consulitur, docet, qui in interiore homine habitare dictus est Christus; id est incommutabilis Dei virtus atque sempiterna Sapientia. De mag.* 12.38. Cf. below, 11.3.5.

that they be placed close at hand, as it were, in this same memory, where they formerly lay scattered about and unnoticed, that they may eventually come easily to the attention of a mind already familiar with them.

How many things of this kind my memory holds which are already found out, and, as I say, placed ready at hand, as it were—things which we are said to have learned and to know! If I cease to recall them to mind for even a short period of time, they are again submerged and slip off, as it were, into the more removed recesses, so that they must again be excogitated, as if new, from the same place as before—there is no other place for them—and they must be drawn together [*cogenda*] again, so that they may be known. That is, they must be collected as if from a condition of being dispersed; hence, one speaks of cogitating. For, *cogo* [draw together] and *cogito* [cogitate] are related as are *ago* [do] and *agito* [do constantly] and as *facio* [make] and *factito* [make frequently].[48] But the mind has made this word its own property, so that what is collated, that is, drawn together, in the mind, but not in any other place, is now properly said to be cogitated.[49]

Chapter 12

(19) Again, memory contains the reasons and innumerable laws of numbers and dimensions, none of which any bodily sense impresses; for, these are neither colored, nor resonant, nor odorous, nor tasty, nor tangible. I have heard the sounds of words by which they are signified when there is a discussion about them, but these sounds are one thing

---

48 The derivation of *cogito* from *cogo* is from Varro, *Ling. lat.* 6.43; cf. Gibb-Montgomery, *Conf.* 286.25.

49 For the technical meaning of cogitation, cf. above, Bk. 5 n. 16.

and the objects are another. For, the sounds are different in Greek from what they are in Latin, but the things are neither Greek nor Latin, nor do they belong to any kind of language. I have seen the lines of craftsmen—even the thinnest ones, like a strand from a spider's web; but these [mathematical lines] are quite different. They are not the images of those lines which my fleshly eye has reported to me. They are known by whoever recognizes them interiorly, without cogitation about any body whatever. I have perceived, also, the numbers which we reckon in all the bodily senses, but the ones *by which* we do the counting are quite different. They are not images of these, and so, they really exist. Let him laugh at my saying this, the man who does not see them. I shall pity him for laughing at me.[50]

Chapter 13

(20) I hold all these things in memory, and I also remember the way I learned them. I have heard and keep in memory the many things most falsely said against them in arguments. Now, even though they are false, the fact that I remember them is not false. I remember, too, that I distinguished between those truths and these errors which are said in opposition. In one way I see that I am now distinguishing these two things, and in another way I remember that I have often made this distinction when I cogitated on them. Therefore, I both remember that I have often understood these things and, as for the fact that I now perceive and understand them, this I store up in memory, so that afterwards I may remember that I now did understand. And so,

50 For a Platonist (and for St. Augustine) the perfect intelligible numbers which the mind can 'see' are far more real than the numbered things in the order of sense objects. Cf. *De ordine* 1.3.6; *De musica* 6.2.2-6.16.

I remember that I remembered, just as later, if I recall that I could now remember these things, I shall certainly recall it through the power of memory.

Chapter 14

(21) The same memory contains also the feelings of my mind, not in the way that the mind itself possesses them, when it undergoes them, but quite differently, in the way that the power of memory is related to itself. For, I can remember having experienced joy, yet not be joyful; I recall my past sorrow, without being sorrowful; I recollect that I formerly was in fear, without present fear; and I have remembrance of former desire, without present desire. Sometimes, on the contrary, I reminisce about my departed sorrow with present joy, and my joy with present sorrow.

There is nothing to be wondered at in this, in regard to the body; the mind is one thing, the body another. Thus, if I remember with joy a past pain of the body, that is not so astonishing; however, this is different with the mind, since the mind is memory itself. Thus, when we give something to be memorized, we say: 'See that you keep this in mind'; and when we forget, we say: 'It was not in my mind' and 'It slipped my mind'—for we call the memory itself, mind.

Since this is so, then, how is it that, when I remember with joy my past sorrow, my mind possesses joy and my memory sorrow? And, when the mind is joyful from the fact that joy is present in it, how is it, then, that the memory is not sorrowful from the fact that sorrow is present in it? Does memory, perhaps, not belong to the mind? Who would claim this?

Without doubt, memory is something like a stomach for the mind; so, joy and sorrow are like sweet and bitter food. When they are committed to memory, conveyed down, as it

were, into the stomach where they come to be stored, they cannot be tasted. It is ridiculous to consider these things similar, yet they are not entirely dissimilar.

(22) But, look, when I say that there are four passions[51] of the mind, I bring forth from memory desire, joy, fear, and sorrow. Whatever I could say in a discussion about them, by dividing each into the species within the genus of each and by defining them, it is in the memory that I find what to say and from there that I bring it forth. However, I do not suffer any of these passions when I take note of them by remembering. Yet, before they were recalled by me and reviewed, they were there. For that reason, it was possible to draw them out of it through remembrance.

It may be, then, that these are produced from memory, in the process of recall, just as food is from the stomach in the process of rumination. But, why is the sweetness of joy, or the bitterness of sorrow, not perceived in the mouth of cogitation by the man engaged in discussion, that is, the man who is reminiscing? Is this the point of dissimilarity, since they surely are not wholly alike? Who would willingly speak of things of this sort, if every time we mention sorrow or fear we were forced to undergo sorrow or fear? Yet, we would not speak of them unless we found in our memory not only the sounds of their names according to images impressed by the senses of the body, but also the notions of the things themselves which we did not receive through any avenue of the flesh. The mind itself, in sensing, through the experience of its own passions, committed them to memory; or, the memory retained them for itself, even though they were not committed to it.

---

51 This is the traditional Stoic list of four passions, probably known to Augustine through Cicero, *De finibus* 3.10.35. St. Ambrose introduced a good deal of Stoic thought into Christian moral theory, in his *De officiis* (cf. Bourke, *St. Thomas and the Greek Moralists* [Milwaukee 1947] 13-14; 56-57).

Chapter 15

(23) Whether through images or not, who can easily say? In fact, I can name a stone, I can name the sun, while the things themselves are not present to my senses. Of course, their images are at hand in my memory. I can name bodily pain, and it is not present in me when there is no suffering. Yet, unless its image were present in my memory, I would not know what I am talking about, and I would not distinguish it from pleasure, in a discussion. I can name the health of the body, while I am healthy in my body; the thing itself is indeed present in me. Yet, in fact, unless its image were also present in my memory, I would not recall at all what the sound of this name meant. Nor would sick people know what was said, when health is named, unless the same image were kept by the power of memory, although the thing itself were absent from the body.

I can name the numbers by which we count; see, they are in my memory: not their images, but themselves. I can name the image of the sun and it is present in my memory. I do not recall an image of an image, but simply the image; it is present to me when I remember. I can name the memory and I recognize what I am naming. Where do I recognize it unless in memory itself? Now, could it be present to itself through its own image, and not through itself?

Chapter 16

(24) Now, when I name oblivion, and likewise recognize what I am naming, what would be the source of my recognition if I did not remember it? I am not talking about the sound of the name, but the thing which it signifies. Now, if I had forgotten this meaning, I should not be able at all to

recognize what the sound's function is. Therefore, when I remember my memory, the very memory is present to itself in itself, but, when I remember oblivion, both memory and oblivion are present—memory, as that from which I recall; oblivion, as that which I recall. But, what is oblivion except the privation of memory?[52] How, then, can it be present, so that I may remember it, when I cannot remember while it is present? But, if we keep in memory what we remember, and if, without remembering oblivion, we could not possibly know the meaning of this word when we heard it, then oblivion is retained in memory. Therefore, it is present so that we will not forget, and, when it is present, we do forget.

Or, is one to understand from this that it is not present in memory through itself, when we remember it, but rather through its image—because, if oblivion were present in itself, would not the result be that we would forget, not that we would remember? Now, who will eventually work this out? Who will understand how it is?

(25) Certainly, O Lord, I am working hard on it, and my work is being done on myself; I have become unto myself a soil of difficulty, and of too much sweat.[53] For, we are not now gazing curiously at the sky's expanses,[54] nor are we measuring the distances between the stars, nor are we trying to weigh the earth; I am the one who is remembering, I am the mind. It is not so astonishing if whatever I am not is far distant from me, but what is nearer to me than myself? And,

---

52 Augustine's difficulty with oblivion is, at least partly, due to ambiguity in the use of memory and its privative term, oblivion. He does not clearly distinguish the capacity to remember from the act of remembering, nor complete oblivion (total amnesia) from the forgetfulness of one item of knowledge.

53 Cf. Gen. 3.17-19.

54 Cf. Ennius' lines: 'No one considers what lies before his feet; they search the broad expanses of the sky.' (These lines are quoted by Cicero. *De divin.* 2.13.30). For a parallel in thought, cf. Aristotle, *De partibus animalium* 1.5: 644b31-645a4.

notice, the power of my memory is not understood by me, yet, at the same time, I cannot speak of myself without it. What should I say, when it is a certitude to me that I do remember oblivion? Or, should I say that what I remember is not in my memory? Or, should I say that oblivion is in my memory just for this—that I may not forget? Both are most absurd.

What of a third possibility? On what basis may I say that the image of oblivion is kept in my memory, not oblivion itself, when I do remember it? On what basis, too, may I say this, since, when any image of a thing is impressed on memory, it is first necessary for the thing itself to be present, from which the image can be impressed? For, thus do I remember Carthage; thus, all the places where I have been; thus, the faces of the men I have seen and the things reported by the other senses; thus, the health of the body itself or its pain. When these things were at hand, my memory took the images from them, which, as being present, I might see directly and review in my mind when I remembered the things in their absence.

If, then, oblivion is held in memory through its image and not through itself, it must certainly have been present itself, in order that its image might be grasped. Now, when it was present, how did it write its image in the memory, when oblivion erases, by its presence, even what it finds already known? Yet, I am certain that I do remember in some manner or other, though this manner be incomprehensible and inexplicable, even oblivion itself, whereby the object we remember is consigned to destruction.

Chapter 17

(26) Great is the power of memory; its deep and boundless multiplicity is something fearful, O my God! And this is

the mind,[55] and I am this myself. What, then, am I, O my God? What is my nature? A life of many aspects and many ways, strikingly immeasurable.

Look into the fields, hollows, and innumerable caverns of my memory, filled beyond number with innumerable kinds of things, either by means of images as in the case of all bodies, or by means of their own presence as in the case of the arts, or by means of some sort of notions or impressions as in the case of the feelings of the mind (which the memory keeps even when the mind is not undergoing them, though whatever is in the memory is in the mind!). I run through all these things, and I flit here and there. I even go as deep as I can, yet there is no limit. So great is the power of memory, so great is the power of life in man who lives mortally!

What shall I do, Thou true Life of mine, O my God? I shall pass over even this power of mine which is called memory; I shall pass over it to reach Thee, sweet Light. What dost Thou say to me? Behold, going up through my mind to Thee, who dwellest above me, I shall even pass over this power of mine which is called memory, desiring to attain Thee where Thou canst be attained, and to cleave to Thee where it is possible to be in contact with Thee.

For, even beasts and birds have memory; otherwise, they could not find their lairs[56] and nests, or the many other things to which they become accustomed. And they could not grow accustomed to any thing, unless through memory. Therefore, I shall even pass over memory to attain Him who has set me apart from the four-footed beasts and made me 'wiser than the fowls of the air.'[57] I shall even pass over memory,

55 For Augustine, *memoria* is not a faculty of the soul, but the whole soul, as conscious of itself and contents; memory even includes the subconscious presence of anything to the soul, and, thus, God is always in memory. Cf. *De Trin.* 14.6.8-11.14; cf. Gilson, *Introduction* (1943) 134-135.

56 Cf. Vergil, *Georg.* 3.316.

57 Job. 35.11.

so that I may find Thee—where, O truly good and serene Sweetness—where shall I find Thee? But, if I find Thee without memory, I am without remembrance of Thee. And how, indeed, may I find Thee, if I am without remembrance of Thee?[58]

Chapter 18

(27) The woman who had lost her drachma and looked for it with a lamp[59] would not have found it, unless she retained some remembrance of it. For, when it had been found, how would she know whether it was the one, if she retained no remembrance of it? I remember many lost things which I have looked for and found. From this, I know that, when I was looking for one of them, and people would say to me: 'Perhaps this is it? Maybe this one?' I would continue to say: 'It is not,' until the thing I was seeking was shown to me. Unless I had some remembrance of it, whatever it was, I should not have found it, even if it were shown to me, for I should not have recognized it. That is always the way it is, when we look for some lost thing and find it. Yet, of course, when by chance something is lost from sight, not from memory—any visible body, for example—its image is retained within, and it is sought until it comes back within view. And, when it is found, it is recognized from the image which is within. We do not say that we have found what we lost, if we do not recognize it, and we cannot recognize it, if we do not remember it. It disappeared, indeed, from before our eyes, but it was retained in memory.

58 In *Meno* 80D, Plato had asked how one could look for anything absolutely new, implying that, were it not present in some way in memory, it could not be recognized when found.

59 Cf. Luke 15.8.

Chapter 19

(28) What? When the memory itself loses something, as happens when we forget and try to remember, pray, where do we look for it, unless in the memory itself? And in it, if one thing is presented in place of another, we reject it until the thing we are looking for turns up. When it does turn up, we say: 'This is it.' We would not say that unless we recognized it, and we would not recognize it unless we remembered. Yet, we certainly had forgotten it.

Or, had it disappeared, not completely, but only in part? And is the other part sought, by means of that which is retained, because the memory felt that its object of consideration was not as complete as usual, and, feeling the defect in a habit which was, as it were, defective in some part, it strove to get back what was missing?

For instance, if a man who is known comes before our eyes or into our thoughts, and we are trying to recall his name, which we have forgotten, then, any other name which occurs fails to be connected, because it has not been customary for our thought of him to go along with it; hence, it is rejected until that name occurs which our customary way of thinking of the man accepts as not inappropriate. And, from what source does it occur, if not from memory itself? For, when we recognize it, on being reminded by someone else, it is from there that it comes. So, we do not accept it as something new, but, in recalling it, we judge that what has been said is the right name. But, if it is entirely wiped out of mind, then we do not remember even when reminded. And, if we even remember that we have forgotten it, then we have not yet completely forgotten. Therefore, we would not be able to look for something that has been lost, if we had altogether forgotten it.

Chapter 20

(29) Now, how do I look for Thee, O Lord? When I look for Thee, my God, I am looking for the happy life.[60] May I seek Thee, so that my soul may live.[61] For, my body has life from my soul, and my soul has life from Thee. How, then, do I seek the happy life? It is not mine, until I can say: 'Enough, there it is.' Here, then, I ought to say how I do look for it, whether through remembrance, as though I had forgotten it and I still retained the fact that I had forgotten, or through a desire to learn it as something unknown, either something I never knew, or which I have so forgotten that I have no remembrance even that I have forgotten it. Surely, the happy life is this: what all men desire and [such that] there is absolutely no one who does not desire it? Where did they know it, this object which they desire in such a way? Where did they see it, to love it so? Certainly, we do possess it, but how I know not.

There is one certain way whereby each man, when he possesses this object, is then happy, and there also are those who are happy in hope. The latter possess it in an inferior way, compared to those who are already really happy, yet they are better off than those others who are happy neither in reality nor in hope. Still, unless this third kind of people possessed it, in some way, they would not desire to be happy; that they have such a desire is most certain. Somehow or other they came to know it, and so they possess it in some kind or other of knowledge. My problem concerning this is whether it may be in the memory; for, if it is there, then we were at one time happy, either all individually, or all

60 The universal search for a happy life is a common theme among classic writers Augustine's *De beata vita* (translated by L. Schopp in this series [New York 1948]) is, of course his early treatment of the topic.

61 Isa. 55.3.

in that man[62] who was the first to sin, in whom also we all died,[63] from whom we are all born amidst unhappiness. I do not ask this question now,[64] but I do ask whether the happy life is in the memory.

Now, we would not love it, unless we knew it. We hear this word and we all admit that we seek this thing, for we are not delighted merely by the sound. When a Greek hears this word in Latin, he is not delighted, for he does not know what has been said. Yet, we Latins are delighted, as he is, too, if he hears it in Greek, for the thing itself it neither Greek nor Latin, this thing which Greeks and Latins and men of every tongue yearn to obtain. So, it is known to all men who, if they could be asked whether they desire to be happy, would reply in one voice, without any hesitation, that they do.[65] This would be impossible, unless the thing itself, of which this is the name, were kept in their memory.

Chapter 21

(30) Now, is this the same as the case of the man who, having seen Carthage,[66] remembers it? No! The happy life is not seen with the eyes, since it is not a body.

Is it like the example of our remembering numbers? No! One who possesses these in knowledge[67] does not seek to obtain further, but we possess the happy life in knowledge, and so we love it, yet wish to attain it further so that we may *be* happy.

62 Adam.
63 Cf. 1 Cor. 15.22.
64 Cf. *De civ. Dei* 19.4.
65 Cf. Aristotle, *Eth. Nicom.* 1.4: 1095a15; a text which Augustine did not know at first hand, but he would be acquainted with the Aristotelian position through Cicero, *De finibus* 5.5. Cf., also, Augustine, *Serm.* 150.3.4.
66 Cf. above, 10.16.25.
67 *notitia*: translated as 'knowledge.'

Is it like the instance where we remember the art of oratory? No! For, though, when this word has been heard, people recall to mind the thing itself, even those who are not yet eloquent—and many do desire to be (whence it is apparent that eloquence exists in their knowledge), but, on the other hand, they have observed through the senses of the body that other people are eloquent and they are delighted and long to be likewise; they would not be delighted except from interior knowledge and they would not desire to be likewise unless they were so delighted. However, we do not have personal experience of the happy life in other people, through any sense of the body.[68]

Is it like the way in which we remember joy? Perhaps so. For, I remember my joy even when sad, just as I do the happy life when I am unhappy, and I have never seen, or heard, or smelled, or tasted, or touched my joy by any sense of the body, but I have experienced it in my mind when I have been joyful. Its knowledge stuck in my memory, so that I am able to remember it, sometimes with contempt, sometimes with longing, depending on the difference between the things from which my joy came, as I remember it. For, I have been imbued with a certain joy arising from shameful things, and, as I now recall this, I feel disgust and curse it; at other times, it arises from good and virtuous things, and I recall it with longing, even though, perhaps, they are no longer available, and therefore I am saddened as I recall my former joy.

(31) Where, then, and when did I experience my happy life that I should now remember, love, and desire it? Not just I alone, or in the company of a few people, but absolutely all people want to be happy. Unless we knew it with certain

---

68 A notoriously difficult sentence in Latin: those interested in its structure should consult De Labriolle, *Conf.* 2.264; Gibb-Montgomery, *Conf.* 297.

knowledge, we would not will it with such a certain act of will. But, how is this? If the question be asked of two men whether they wish to serve in the army, it is quite possible that one of them may reply that he wants to, the other that he does not. But, if they are asked whether they wish to be happy, both will say at once and without any hesitation that they do desire it. Nor is there any different reason why one wishes to enter military service and the other does not, than that they wish to be happy. One man, perhaps, finds his joy in one thing, another man in a another? Even so, they agree that they all wish to be happy, just as they would agree, if asked the question, that they wish to possess joy. This joy they call the happy life. Even though one man attains it here, another there, still it is but one thing which all men strive to reach, so that they may be joyful. Now, since this is a thing which no man can deny experiencing, it is therefore recognized as found in the memory, when the name, happy life, is heard.

Chapter 22

(32) Far be it, O Lord, far be it from the heart of Thy servant who is confessing to Thee, far be it that I should consider myself happy by virtue of just any joy which I experience. For, there is a joy which is not given to the wicked,[69] but rather to them who serve Thee for Thine own sake; for such people, Thou Thyself art Joy. And this is the happy life, to rejoice unto Thee, from Thee, on account of Thee: this it is and there is none other.[70] They who think that there is another pursue a different joy, and not the true one. Yet, their will is not turned away from some representation of joy.

69 Cf. Isa. 48.22.
70 Cf. *De civ. Dei* 8.9.

Chapter 23

(33) Is it, then, uncertain that all men wish to be happy, because those who do not wish to find their joy in Thee—and this is the only happy life—do not, in point of fact, desire the happy life? Or, do all desire this, but, because 'the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh . . . so that they do not do what they wish,'[71] they descend to that of which they are capable and are content with it, for they do not desire that for which they have insufficient capacity, to the extent that their desire would render them capable of it?

Now, I ask all men whether they would prefer to get their joy from truth rather than from falsity? They will hesitate as little to say that they prefer it from truth as they hesitate in saying that they wish to be happy. Indeed, the happy life is joy arising from truth. For, this is the joy coming from Thee, who art the Truth,[72] O God; Thou art 'my light,'[73] the salvation of my countenance, O my God.[74] This happy life all men desire; this life, which alone is happy, all men desire; the joy arising from truth all men desire.

I have been acquainted with many men who wished to deceive, but not one who wished to be deceived.[75] Where, then, did they get their knowledge of this happy life, unless where they got their knowledge of truth, too? For they love the latter, also, since they do not wish to be deceived. And, when they love the happy life, which is nothing other than joy arising from truth, they certainly love truth, also. Nor

71 Gal. 5.17.
72 John 14.6.
73 Ps. 26.1.
74 Ps. 41.12.
75 On Augustine's theory of error, cf. *Enchiridion* 5.17 (trans. by B. M. Peebles in this series [New York 1947], pp. 381-383); cf. L. W. Keeler, S. J., 'St. Augustine on the Problem of Error,' *Thought*, 8 (1933) 410ff.; reprinted as one chapter in *The Problem of Error from Plato to Kant* (Roma [Gregorianum] 1934).

would they love it, unless some knowledge of it were in their memory.

Why, then, do they not take their joy from it? Why are they not happy? Because they are more keenly concerned with other things[76] which have greater power to make them unhappy than this, which they faintly remember, to make them happy. 'Yet a little while the light is'[77] in men; let them walk, walk, lest darkness overtake them.

(34) But, why does 'truth engender hatred'[78] and Thy man who speaks the truth has become a enemy to them,[79] when a happy life is loved and it is nothing but joy arising from truth? Is it that truth is so loved that, whoever love something else, they wish this object of love to be the truth, and, since they did not want to be deceived, they do not want to be shown that they have been deceived? Therefore, they hate the truth because of the same thing which they love in place of truth. They love truth when it enlightens; they hate it when it reproves.[80] Since they not wish to be deceived, and they do wish to deceive, they love it when it reveals its own self, and they hate it when it reveals themselves. Its retribution upon them stems from this: they who do not wish to be revealed by it, it both reveals against their will and is not itself revealed to them.

Thus, thus, even thus is the human mind, even thus is it blind and weak; it wishes to lie hidden, a foul and unattractive thing, but does not wish anything to be hidden to it. What befalls it is the contrary: it is not hidden before the truth, but the truth is hidden before it. Nevertheless, even while it is in such unhappiness, it prefers to rejoice in true things rather than in false. It will be happy, then, if, with

76 Cf. *De lib. arb.* 1.14.30.
77 John 12.35.
78 A proverb taken from Terence: *Obsequium amicos, veritas odium parit* (*Andria* 68).
79 John 8.40.
80 Cf. John 3.20.

no hindrance interposed, it will come to rejoice in that through which all things are true, in the only Truth.

Chapter 24

(35) See how much I have traveled about in the spaciousness of my memory while looking for Thee, O Lord, and I have not found Thee outside it. Nor have I found anything about Thee which I did not keep in memory, ever since I learned of Thee. For, from the time that I learned of Thee, I did not forget Thee. Now, wherever I found truth, there did I find my God, Truth Itself, and from the time that I learned of the Truth, I have not forgotten. Therefore, from the time that I learned about Thee, Thou dost dwell in my memory, and there do I find Thee when I remember Thee and delight in Thee. These are my holy delights which Thou hast given me in Thy mercy, having regard to my poverty.

Chapter 25

(36) But, where dost Thou dwell in my memory, O Lord; where dost Thou dwell there? What resting place hast Thou fashioned for Thyself? What sanctuary hast Thou built for Thyself? Thou hast granted this favor to my memory, to dwell in it, but in which part of it Thou dost dwell, this I now consider. When I recalled Thee to mind, I went above those parts of it which the beasts also possess, for I did not find Thee there among the images of bodily things. So, I came to the parts of it in which I keep my mental feelings, but I did not find Thee there. So, I entered into the seat of my very mind, and there is one for it in my memory, since the mind also remembers itself, and Thou wert not there. Because,

just as Thou art not a bodily image, nor the feeling of a living being, such as occurs when we are joyful, sorrowful, longing, fearful, mindful, forgetful, or anything else of this kind, so, too, Thou art not the mind itself. For, Thou art the Lord God of the mind, and all these things are mutable, but Thou dwellest as an immutable Being above them all. So, Thou hast deigned to reside in my memory, from the time that I have learned about Thee.

And why do I look for the place in it where Thou dost dwell, as if there really were places in it? What is certain is that Thou dwellest in it, for I remember Thee from the time that I have learned about Thee, and I do find Thee in it when I recall Thee to mind.

Chapter 26

(37) Where, then, did I find Thee in order to learn about Thee? For, Thou wert not already in my memory before I learned of Thee. Where, then, did I find Thee in order to learn about Thee, unless in Thyself above me?[81] Yet, there is no place. We go backward and we go forward,[82] yet there is no place. O Truth, Thou dost preside over all things, even those which can take counsel with Thee, and Thou dost answer in the same time all who consult Thee, however diverse their questions. Thou dost answer clearly, but all do not hear clearly. All seek counsel concerning what they wish, but they do not always hear what they wish. He serves Thee best who does not so much expect to hear[83] the thing

81 This is the conclusion of the famous demonstration of the existence of God, *De lib. arb.* 2.15.39: 'nor should there be any doubt about it now: the Immutable Nature, which is above the rational soul, is God'; cf. *De vera relig.* 31.57.

82 Cf. Job 23.8.

83 Cf. Hab. 2.1.

from Thee which he himself desires, but rather to desire what he hears from Thee.

Chapter 27

(38) Late have I loved Thee,[84] O Beauty so ancient and so new, late have I loved Thee! And behold, Thou wert within and I was without. I was looking for Thee out there, and I threw myself, deformed as I was, upon those well-formed things which Thou hast made. Thou wert with me, yet I was not with Thee. These things held me far from Thee, things which would not have existed had they not been in Thee. Thou didst call and cry out and burst in upon my deafness; Thou didst shine forth and glow and drive away my blindness; Thou didst send forth Thy fragrance, and I drew in my breath, and now I pant for Thee; I have tasted, and now I hunger and thirst; Thou didst touch me, and I was inflamed with desire for Thy peace.

Chapter 28

(39) When I shall cleave to Thee with all my being, sorrow and toil will no longer exist for me, and my life will be alive, being wholly filled with Thee. At the present time, however, because Thou dost lift up whomever Thou fillest and I am not filled with Thee, I am a burden to myself. My joys, which are to be lamented, struggle against my sorrows, which are cause for joy, and I know not on which side victory may stand.

---

84 This lyric passage is often quoted and is one of the best known texts in the *Confessions*.

My evil sorrows struggle with my good joys, and I know not on which side victory may stand. Alas for me! Have mercy on me, O Lord![85] Alas for me! Behold, I do not hide my wounds: Thou art the Physician, I am a sick man; Thou art merciful, I am a miserable man. Is not 'the life of man upon earth a trial?'[86] Who would want troubles and hardships? Thou dost command that they be endured, not loved. No man loves what he endures, even though he loves to endure. For, though he rejoice that he can endure them, he prefers to have nothing to endure. Amid adversities, I long for successes; amid successes, I fear adversities. What is the middle area between these, where the life of man is not a trial? Woe to the successes of this world, once and again, because of the fear of adversity and the corruption of joy. Woe to the adversities of this world, once, twice and thrice, because of the yearning for success, both because adversity itself is hard and because it may break down endurance! Is not 'the life of man upon earth a trial,' without any interruption?

Chapter 29

(40) My whole hope is nowhere but in Thy exceedingly great mercy. Grant what Thou dost command and command what Thou wilt.[87] Thou dost command continence for us.

---

85 Ps. 30.10.

86 Job 7.1: Augustine's version had *temptatio* where the Vulgate has *militia*.

87 These famous words, *Da quod jubes et jube quod vis,* disturbed the heresiarch, Pelagius, very much. As Augustine wrote later, 'when Pelagius heard these words of mine mentioned by a certain bother and fellow bishop, in his presence, he [Pelagius] could not stand them. He was no little disturbed and contradicted them; he practically started a quarrel with the man who mentioned them' (*De dono perseverantiae* 20.53). Pelagius felt that Augustine was minimizing the human capacity to do what is good. The heretic maintained that the *De libero arbitrio* is opposed to the present passage; but cf. *Retract.* 1.9.

'And as I knew,' a certain man has said, 'that no one could be continent, except God gave it, this also was a point of wisdom, to know whose gift it was.'[88] Through continence, in fact, we are gathered in and returned to the One from whom we have flowed out into the many.[89] For, he loves Thee less who loves something else along with Thee, which he does not love for Thy sake.[90] O Love, who ever burnest and art never extinguished, O Charity, my God, kindle me! Thou dost command continence; grant what Thou dost command and command what Thou wilt.

Chapter 30

(41) Certainly, Thou dost command me to refrain from 'concupiscence of the flesh and concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of this world.'[91] Thou hast commanded [restraint] from concubinage and, in regard to marriage itself, which Thou hast permitted, Thou hast advised something better. Since Thou hast granted it, it has been accomplished, and I reached this state even before becoming a minister of Thy sacrament.[92] But, there still live in my memory, and I have spoken much about it, the images of such things which habit has imprinted therein. When I am awake, they occur to me, though indeed they are not strong, but in sleep it is not merely a question of pleasure; it even goes as far as consent and something very much like the deed. So great is the illusive power of an image over my soul and my flesh

88 Wisd. 8.21.

89 This sentence is obviously Neo-Platonic. Cf. *Ennead.* 6.9.4: 'The soul thus passes beyond the unit and falls into number and plurality' (Clark, *Selections from Hellenistic Philos.* 265).

90 Cf. *De Trin.* 9.8.13; *De mor. eccl. Cath.* 39.

91 1 John 2.16. Cf. Augustine's comments on this text, *Enarr. in ps.* 8.5 *ad fin.*

92 Cf. 1 Cor. 4.1.

that these false things, seen while sleeping, influence me in a manner that real things cannot while I am awake. Am I not myself, at such times, O Lord my God? Nevertheless, there is such a great difference between myself at one moment and myself at another, between the moment when I go to sleep and that when I awaken from it!

Where is reason at such a time, which resists such temptations, when I am awake, and remains firm so that I am unaffected even when real temptations are presented? Is it closed up along with my eyes? Does it go to sleep along with the bodily senses? How is it, then, that we frequently offer resistance during sleep, remembering our good resolutions, most chastely adhering to them, and giving no assent to such allurements? Yet, there is so much difference that, when it happens otherwise,[93] we may return to peace of conscience on waking up, this very difference permitting us to find that it is not we who have done this; we regret, however, that it has been done by us in some way or other.

(42) Is Thy hand, O all-powerful God, not strong enough to heal all the diseases[94] of my soul and to extinguish with Thy more abundant grace[95] these lascivious passions, even during my sleep? Thou wilt increase, O Lord, Thy gifts more and more within me, so that my soul, escaping from the viscous snare of concupiscence, may follow me to Thee, so that it may not be in rebellion against itself, and so that during sleep it will also not only refrain from these debasing acts of turpitude which end in pollution of the flesh as a result of sensual images, but will not even consent to them.[96] For,

93 I.e., when concupiscence is not resisted during sleep.

94 Ps. 102.3.

95 1 Tim. 1.14.

96 The frankness of this passage has actually been a blessing to moral theologians. For a discussion of the act of *consensus,* in Thomistic terminology, cf. St. Thomas, *S.T.,* I-II, q. 15, art. 1-4. For the actual problem discussed by St. Augustine, cf. St. Thomas' decision, *S.T.,* II-II, q. 154, art. 5 *in toto,* where Augustine's *De Gen. ad lit.* 12.15.31 is the determining authority.

that such a thing may give no pleasure, or only so slight a pleasure that it can be controlled without difficulty even during the sleep of one who is disposed to be chaste, not only in this life, but even at this stage of life—this is no great feat for an omnipotent Being, 'who art able to accomplish all things in a measure far beyond what we ask or conceive.'[97] Now, however, I have told my good Lord what I am at present in this kind of evil of mine, 'rejoicing unto Him with trembling'[98] for what Thou hast given me; sorrowing for the fact that I am still imperfect; hoping that Thou wilt perfect Thy mercies in me unto the plenitude of peace, which my interior and exterior parts will possess with Thee, when 'death is swallowed up in victory.'[99]

Chapter 31

(43) There is another 'evil of the day':[100] would that it were sufficient unto it. For, we repair the daily running down of the body by eating and drinking, until Thou dost destroy both food and stomach,[101] when Thou wilt slay my need with a wonderful fullness and clothe this corruptible body with an immortal incorruption.[102]

Now, indeed, the need is sweet to me, yet I fight against this sweetness, lest I be taken over. I wage a daily battle, 'in fastings,'[103] often bringing my body 'into subjection,'[104] yet my sufferings are banished by sensual pleasure. For, hunger and thirst are sufferings of a sort; they burn and kill like

97 Eph. 3.20.
98 Ps. 2.11.
99 1 Cor. 15.54-55.
100 Matt. 6.34.
101 1 Cor. 6.13.
102 1 Cor. 15.54.
103 2 Cor. 11.27.
104 1 Cor. 9.27.

a fever, unless the remedy of food comes to the rescue. Since this is at hand, as a result of the consolation of Thy gifts, among which earth, water and sky minister to our weakness, our disability is called delight.

(44) Thou hast taught me this: that I should partake of foods as if they were medicines. But I reach the condition of peaceful satisfaction, passing from the annoyance of need; I am beset in this very transition by the snare of concupiscence. The transition itself is a sensual delight, yet there is no other way of transition than that which necessity forces us to pass over. Since health is the reason for eating and drinking, perilous enjoyment joins its company, like a lackey, and often strives to get in front so as to become the reason for that act which I claim, and wish, to do only for the sake of health.

Now, the measure is not the same for each, since what is sufficient for health is not enough for enjoyment. It often becomes uncertain whether necessary concern for the body seeks still more sustenance, or whether, urged by the treacherous lust for pleasure, the gratification of greed has begun. The foolish soul grows joyous at this uncertainty and makes ready the protection of an excuse[105] based on this fact; it rejoices that what is enough for healthful moderation is not evident, and so it may conceal the business of sensuality under the pretext of health. I strive every day to resist these temptations; I call upon Thy right hand; I turn over my anxieties to Thee, for good judgment about this matter is not yet established in me.

(45) I hear the voice of my God commanding: 'Let not your hearts be overburdened with self-indulgence and drunkenness.'[106] Drunkenness is far from me: Thou wilt have mercy, lest it come nearer to me. Gluttony, however, sometimes

---

105 Note Augustine's awareness of what modern psychology calls a 'defense mechanism.'

106 Luke 21.34.

sneaks up to seize Thy servant; Thou wilt have mercy, that it may be removed far from me. For, no man can 'be continent, unless Thou givest it.'[107] Thou dost give many things to us when we pray, and whatever good things we received before praying we received from Thee, and the very fact that we later recognize this we have received from Thee. I was never a drunkard, but I have known drunkards who were made sober men by Thee. Therefore, it is Thy doing that those people who never were such should not have been; it was Thy doing that they who were such have not always been so; it is also Thy doing that both should learn whose doing it was.

I have heard another statement of Thine: 'Go not after thy lusts but turn away from thy own pleasure.'[108] And, through Thy help, I have heard still another, which I have loved much: 'Neither shall we have any abundance if we do eat, nor shall we suffer any loss if we do not eat.'[109] That is to say: neither will the former make me rich, nor will the latter make me poor. I have heard yet another: 'For I have learned to be self-sufficing in whatever circumstances I am, and I know how to live in abundance and I know how to suffer want. I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.[110] Behold the soldier of the heavenly camp, not dust such as we are. But remember, O Lord, 'that we are dust'[111] and that of dust Thou hast made man,[112] and 'he was lost and is found.'[113] Nor did he [St. Paul] have this power within himself, for he, too, was of dust, he who said under the influence of Thy inspiration these words which I love: 'I can do all things,' he said, 'in Him who strengthens me.' Strengthen me so that I can; grant what Thou dost com-

107 Wisd. 8.21.
108 Eccli. 18.30.
109 1 Cor. 8.8.
110 Phil. 4.11-14.
111 Ps. 102.14.
112 Cf. Gen. 3.19.
113 Luke 15.24.

mand, and command what Thou wilt.[114] This man [St. Paul] confesses that he received it and that, 'when he glories, he glories in the Lord.'[115] I have heard another man praying that he may receive: 'Take from me,' he said, 'the greediness of the belly.'[116] From this it is evident, O holy God, that it is Thou that givest, when a thing is done which Thou dost command to be done.

(46) Thou hast taught me, O good Father: 'For the clean all things are clean,'[117] 'but a thing is evil for the man who eats through scandal';[118] and 'every creature of Thine is good and nothing is to be rejected that is accepted with thanksgiving';[119] and that 'food does not commend us to God';[120] and that 'no one should call us to account for what we eat and drink';[121] and 'let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats.'[122] These things have I learned, thanks to Thee, praise to Thee, my God, my Teacher, who dost knock at my ears, who dost illumine my heart: deliver me from all temptation.

I do not fear the uncleanness of food,[123] but only the uncleanness of concupiscence. I know that Noe was permitted to eat every kind of flesh meat which was edible;[124] that Elias was nourished on flesh meat;[125] that John, endowed with a marvelous abstinence, was not made unclean by par-

114 Cf. *De natura et gratia* 43.
115 Cf. 1 Cor. 1.31.
116 Eccli. 23.6.
117 Tit. 1.15.
118 Rom. 14.20.
119 1 Tim. 4.4.
120 1 Cor. 8.8.
121 Cf. Col. 2.16.
122 Rom. 14.3.
123 The word *obsonium* (Gr. *opsónion*) means anything eaten with bread; so, often, *meat;* but the sequence shows that Augustine is thinking of any sort of food.
124 Cf. Gen. 9.3.
125 3 Kings 17.6.

taking of living things, namely, the locusts which happened to be available as food.[126] And I know that Esau was led into error by his greed for lentils;[127] that David blamed himself for his craving for water;[128] and that our King was tempted, not by flesh, but by bread.[129] Further, the people in the desert deserved to be reprimanded, not because they desired flesh meat, but because they murmured against the Lord as a result of this desire for meat.[130]

(47) Having been placed among these temptations, then, I struggle daily against concupiscence in eating and drinking. This is not something which I can resolve to cut off at once and never touch again, as I was able to do in regard to sexual indulgence.[131] Thus, the reins on my palate are to be held in a temperate balance between looseness and tightness. And, O Lord, what man is not somewhat carried beyond the bounds of necessity? Whoever he is, he is a great man; let him magnify Thy Name. Yet, I am not he, 'for I am a sinful man.'[132] But, I also magnify Thy Name, and He intercedes[133] with Thee for my sins, He who 'has overcome the world,'[134] numbering me among the weak members of His body,[135] for 'Thy eyes did see His imperfect part, and in Thy book all shall be written.'[136]

---

126 Matt. 3.4.
127 Gen. 25.30-34.
128 2 Kings 23.15-17.
129 Matt. 4.3.
130 Num. 11.4.
131 Augustine says that he 'commanded himself' not to look for a wife (*Solil.* 1.10.17); however, it was not quite as simple as that; cf. above, 6.15.25.
132 Luke 5.8.
133 Rom. 8.34.
134 John 16.33.
135 On the Church and the Mystical Body of Christ. cf. *Ennar. in ps.* 130.6, a passage translated in Bourke, *Augustine's Quest of Wisdom* 282-283.
136 Cf. Ps. 138.16. In his *Enarratio* on this psalm, Augustine (n. 21) instances Peter as an imperfect member; cf. also, *Serm.* 135.

Chapter 32

(48) With the allurements of odoriferous objects I am not excessively concerned. When they are lacking, I do not need them; when they are present, I do not reject them, being ready to do without them forever. That is the way I appear to myself; perhaps I am mistaken. For, there are these lamentable darknesses in which my capacity which is within me lies hidden to me, so that my mind, questioning itself about its powers, does not regard itself as easy to believe. For, what is in it is often hidden, unless uncovered by experience, and no one should be free of care in this life, which is called wholly a trial,[137] whether he who has been capable of becoming better from a worse condition may not also become worse from the better condition. One hope, one confidence, one firm promise—Thy mercy.

Chapter 33

(49) The pleasures of hearing had held me in tighter bonds and had imposed their yoke upon me, but Thou didst break it and deliver me. I admit that, at present, when Thy words are chanted with sweet and well-trained voice in tones to which those words give life, I do take some little pleasure, not so that I am attached to them, but so that I can rise above them when I wish. Yet, in order that they may be admitted, along with the thoughts by means of which they come into life, they seek in my heart a place of considerable dignity, and I can scarcely offer them a fitting one. Sometimes, indeed, I seem to grant them more respect than is fitting, when I perceive that our minds are moved more religiously and ardently toward the flame of piety by these

137 Job 7.1; cf. above, n. 86.

holy words, when they are sung in this way, than if they are not so sung; and that all feelings of our spirit, in its various dispositions, have their own modes in voice and song, which are stirred up because of some hidden affinity with them. Yet, the bodily delight, which should not be allowed to enervate the mind, often deceives me, when sense does not keep company with reason so as to follow it passively; but, although it owes the fact of its admission to reason, it strives even to run ahead and lead it. So, in these matters I sin without noticing it, but afterwards I become aware of it.

(50) Sometimes, on the other hand, in giving too much attention to the avoidance of this deception, I err on the side of excessive severity. At times, in fact, I could eagerly desire that all the sweet melody of the chants whereby the Psalter of David is accompanied were banished from my ears and from the whole Church. And then it seems safer to me to follow what I remember was often told me about Bishop Athanasius[138] of Alexandria. He had the reader of the psalms use such slight vocal modulation that it was closer to ordinary speaking than to singing.

Yet, when I recall the tears which I shed over the hymns in Thy church at the early period of the recovery of my faith, and now today when I am affected not by the singing, but by the words which are sung, provided they are sung in a clear voice and with the most appropriate modulation, I again recognize the great usefulness of this practice.[139]

So, I waver between the danger of sensual enjoyment and the experience of healthful employment, and, though not, indeed, to offer an irrevocable decision, I am more inclined to approve the custom of singing in church, in order that the

138 St. Athanasius (295-373) was the celebrated Bishop of Alexandria who opposed Arianism, and after whom the Athanasian *Credo* is named. Cf. B. Altaner, *Patrologie,* Aufl. 2 (Freiburg i.B. 1950) 230-239.

139 For further encouragement of this liturgical practice, see Augustine, *Epist.* 55.34. Dated A.D. 400, this letter appears to postdate this section of the *Confessions.*

weaker mind may rise to a disposition of piety through these delights of hearing. Nevertheless, when it happens that I am more moved by the song than the thing which is sung, I confess that I sin in a manner deserving of punishment, and, then, I should rather not hear the singing.

See my position! Weep with me and weep for me, you who realize some inner good within yourselves from which good deeds follow. For those who do not act in this way, these words will not move you. But Thou, 'O Lord my God, hear, consider and see, and have mercy, and heal me.'[140] In Thy eyes I have become a problem unto myself and that is my weakness.

Chapter 34

(51) There remains the pleasure of these eyes of my flesh. I speak of it in the form of confessions which the ears of Thy temple[141] may hear, brotherly and pious ears, so that we may bring to a conclusion these temptations of carnal concupiscence which still assail me as I groan, 'yearning to be clothed over with that dwelling of mine which is from Heaven.'[142]

The eyes love beautiful and diverse shapes, brilliant and pleasing colors. Let these things not occupy my soul; let God occupy it, who indeed made all these things which are very good, still He is my Good, not these things. Yet, they affect me every day, while I am awake. No rest from them is given me, such as is given from the voices of song, sometimes from all voices, in a period of silence. For, this queen of the colors, this light diffusing all things which we see, wherever I may be throughout the day, flitting about in manifold ways, entices me while doing something else and not noticing her. She

140 Cf. Ps. 12.4; 6.3.
141 That is, the ears of good Christians; cf. 2 Cor. 5.2.
142 2 Cor. 5.2.

forces herself upon the attention so effectively that, if suddenly cut off, she is sought with longing; if absent for any length of time, she saddens the mind.

(52) O Light which Tobias saw,[143] with his eyes closed, as he taught his son the way of life and walked before him with the step of charity and never a mistake; which Isaac saw,[144] when his fleshly eyes were overburdened and closed with old age, and it was granted him, not, indeed, to bless his sons because he recognized them, but, rather, to recognize them as he blessed them; which Jacob saw, when he, also blind because of great age, sent forth rays of light from his glowing heart upon the tribes of people yet to come, as prefigured in his sons, and imposed upon his grandchildren, through Joseph, his hands symbolically crossed, not as their father tried to put it right[145] considering the external appearance, but as he himself saw from within. This is the Light; it is one, and all who see and love it are one.

But, that corporeal light which I was talking about seasons the life of this world with a seductive and perilous sweetness for those who love it blindly. Yet, those who know how to praise Thee for it, also, 'O God, Who hast created all,'[146] they take this light over for use in a hymn to Thee, and are not taken over by it in their sleep: such do I desire to be. I resist the allurements of my eyes, lest they entangle my feet by which I am progressing on Thy way, and so I lift up my invisible eyes to Thee in order that Thou mayest 'pluck my feet out of the snare.'[147] Thou dost repeatedly pluck them out, for they are easily caught. Thou dost never stop plucking them out, while I frequently get stuck in the traps which are

---

143 See Tob. 2-4, *in toto*.

144 Gen. 27.4; 48-49, *in toto*. cf. Augustine's *Sermo* 4.20.21, *ad fin*.

145 Gen. 48.18; cf. the whole chapter.

146 Cf. 9.12.32, where two stanzas of St. Ambrose's hymn, *Deus Creator omnium*, are given.

147 Ps. 24.15.

spread on all sides, for 'Thou shalt neither slumber nor sleep, that keepest Israel.'[148]

(53) How many seductions without number have men added to the things which entice the eyes, through the various arts and by the work of craftsmen, in the form of clothes, shoes, vessels, and other artefacts of this kind, even in paintings and all sorts of representations—these things far overstep the bounds of necessary utility, moderation, and faithful representation. In this, men become devotees of their external products, while abandoning internally their own Maker and annihilating the things made by Him.

But I, O my God and my Adornment, can even sing a hymn to Thee from this and offer up a sacrifice of praise[149] to Him who sacrifices for me, since the beautiful designs which are transmitted through souls into artful hands come from that Beauty which is above[150] souls, for which my soul sighs day and night. But, those who produce and are devoted to external beauties derive from this Beauty the measure by which they judge them worthy of approval, but they do not get from It a measure by which to use them. Yet, this measure is there and they do not see it:[151] that they may go no farther, but keep their strength for Thee[152] and not scatter it upon enervating delights.

Now I, who am speaking and seeing these things clearly, do get my steps involved in these beautiful things, but Thou dost free me, O Lord, Thou dost free me, 'for Thy mercy is before my eyes.'[153] Indeed, I am caught in my misery, yet Thou dost pluck me out in Thy mercy: sometimes when I am not aware of it, because I had fallen lightly; sometimes with suffering, because I had already stuck fast.

148 Ps. 120.4.
149 Cf. Ps. 115.17.
150 Cf. Plotinus, *Ennead.* 6.9.4 (Clark, *Select. Hellen. Philos.* 265).
151 Cf. *De lib. arb.* 2.16.43.
152 Ps. 58.10.
153 Ps. 25.3.

Chapter 35

(54) To this, another kind of temptation joins company, one dangerous in many ways. For, over and above the concupiscence of the flesh which finds a place in the enjoyment of all sensations and pleasures, to which they who put themselves far from Thee become slaves unto their perdition, there is present in the soul through the same bodily senses a certain vain and curious desire—cloaked under the name of knowledge and science—not for fleshly enjoyment, but for gaining personal experience through the flesh. Because this consists in the craving to know, and the eyes are the chief agents for knowing among the senses, it has been called concupiscence of the eyes[154] in holy Scripture.

Indeed, the proper function of the eyes is to see. We also use this word in reference to the other senses, when we direct them toward the act of knowing. Indeed, we do not say: ' Hear how it gleams,' or 'smell how it glitters,' or 'taste how it shines,' or 'feel how it glows'—'see' is the proper word in all these cases. Thus, we say not only: 'See how it lights up,' which the eyes alone can perceive, but also: 'See how it sounds; see how it smells; see how it tastes; see how hard it is.'[155]

That is why the general experience of the senses, as has been said, is called concupiscence of the eyes, for even the other senses appropriate to themselves, by way of analogy, the function of seeing, where the eyes hold first rank, whenever they seek out any object of knowledge.

(55) Now, from this, one can more clearly perceive what there is of pleasure and of curiosity in the functioning of the senses. Pleasure eagerly pursues beautiful, melodious, sweet-

154 1 John 2.16.
155 Note how accurately Augustine's linguistic observations apply to present-day English; the translation is quite literal.

smelling, attractive-tasting, soft things, but curiosity even seeks the contraries to these, for the sake of trying them, not to undergo any discomfort, but because of a lust for experience and knowledge.

What pleasure is there in seeing a macerated corpse, at which you would stand in horror? Yet, if one is lying around anywhere, people rush to it only to become sad and pale. They are also afraid to see such a thing in their sleep, as if anyone had forced them to see it while awake or some rumor of its beauty had attracted them!

The same holds true for the other senses; it is too long to go over them all. Because of this diseased craving certain monsters are exhibited in shows. From this craving comes the tendency to examine closely the hidden things of nature outside of us; although knowledge of them is of no value, men crave for nothing but to know them. The same craving is responsible if, having in view that same end of perverted science, men use magical arts in their investigations. And it is from the same cause that, in religion itself, God is put on trial, through a demand for signs and wonders, when these are wanted, not for any saving purpose, but simply for the sake of personal experience.

(56) Behold, in this vast forest filled with pitfalls and perils, how many I have cut down and thrust out of my heart, just as Thou hast given me the power to do, O God of my salvation![156] Still, when can I dare to say, as so many things of this kind noisily intrude on every side around our daily life, when can I dare to say that my attention has not been caught by such a thing, so as to look upon it and be overcome by idle interest?

It is true that theatrical presentations do not now carry me away, nor am I concerned to learn the courses of the stars, nor has my soul ever sought answers from ghosts; I

156 Ps. 17.47.

detest all sacrilegious rites. By how many machinations of temptation does the Enemy work with me so that I might ask some sign from Thee, O Lord my God, to whom I owe the humble and simple service of a slave! But, I beseech Thee, through our King and through our simple chaste homeland, Jerusalem,[157] that, however far from me any consent may be, let it be ever farther and farther. But, when I pray to Thee for the salvation of any person, the end of my insistence is quite different: Thou givest and wilt give me to follow voluntarily, while Thou dost what Thou wilt.

(57) Nevertheless, in how many very minute and contemptible things is our curiosity tempted daily,[158] and who can count how often we fall? How often do we at first put up with the tellers of foolish stories, lest we offend the weak, and then by degrees become willing listeners. Nowadays, I do not watch a dog running after a rabbit, when this happens in the circus. But, if I run across it by chance in a field, such a chase distracts me, perhaps, and even draws my attention to itself, away from some important thinking; not through turning off the road on the animal I am riding, but by the inclination of my heart. Unless, through this demonstration of my weakness, Thou dost quickly admonish me either to elevate my thoughts from this sight to Thee through some act of meditation, or to pass on in contempt of the whole thing, I am bemused by it, like an empty-headed man.

When I am sitting at home, and a lizard is catching flies or a spider is entangling them as they rush into his web, how often does it draw my attention? Now, the fact that these are

157 Augustine takes Jerusalem to mean 'vision of peace'; so, its symbolic meaning is the City of God, i.e., the society of all saintly spirits. Cf. *Enchiridon* 20.36.

158 Augustine combined a philosophic and religious conviction, that the study of the world of multable things is of no value, with a lively personal interest in the natural phenomena of the every-day world. Cf. the excellent chapter, 'St. Augustine and the World of Nature,' in H. Pope, *St. Augustine of Hippo* (Westminister, Md. 1949) 228-253.

but small creatures, does that mean that the same thing does not go on? From thence, I do proceed to praise Thee, the wondrous Creator and Orderer of all things, but at first my interest is not in this. It is one thing to rise up quickly; it is quite another not to fall.

My life is full of such things, and my one hope is Thy exceedingly great mercy. For, when our heart is made a container for things of this kind and it carries about a welter of copious vanity, this causes our prayers to be frequently interrupted and disturbed. While we direct the voice of our heart toward Thy ears, in Thy presence, frivolous thoughts rush in from somewhere or other, and the important matter is cut short.

Chapter 36

(58) Shall we, then, number this among things to be held in contempt, or will anything lead us back to hope except Thy well-known mercy, since Thou hast begun to change us? Thou knowest to what extent Thou hast changed me, Thou who didst originally cure me of the lust for vindication, so that Thou mightest forgive even all my other iniquities, and heal all my diseases, and redeem my life from corruption, and crown me with compassion and mercy, and satisfy my desire with good things,[159] who hast repressed my pride by means of Thy fear and tamed my neck by Thy yoke.[160] Now I bear it and it is light upon me, for thus Thou hast promised and made it. And, in truth, it was so, though I did not know, when I was afraid to come under it.

(59) But, O Lord, who alone dost dominate without pride, because Thou art the only true Lord,[161] who hast no

159 Cf. Ps. 102.3-5.
160 Matt. 11.30.
161 Cf. Isa. 37.20.

lord, has this third kind of temptation also ceased for me or can it ever cease in this life—to wish to be feared and loved by men, for no other reason than the enjoyment which derives from this, and which is no joy? It is a wretched life and a foul boasting. Here is a principal source of not loving Thee and not living in chaste fear of Thee; therefore, Thou dost 'resist the proud but giveth grace to the humble,'[162] and Thou dost thunder upon the ambitions of the world and the foundations of the mountains[163] tremble.

Because it is necessary to be loved and feared by men, on account of certain functions in human society, the Adversary of our true happiness keeps urging and spreading 'Well done, well done' among his snares for us. The purpose is that, while we are greedily gathering them in, we may be caught in our carelessness and put our joy far from Thy truth and in the fallacies of men; that we may be pleased at being loved and feared, not on account of Thee, but in place of Thee. In this way the Devil would possess those who have been made like unto him, not for concord in charity, but for companionship in chastisement, for he it is who has determined to place his throne toward the north,[164] so that it will be in cold and darkness that they serve the one who mimics Thee in perverted and distorted ways.

But we, O Lord, see, we are Thy 'little flock';[165] possess us as Thine own. Spread out Thy wings and let us flee under them. Be Thou our glory. Let us be loved for Thy sake and let Thy Word be what is feared in us. He who desires to be praised by men, when Thou dost blame him, will not be defended by men when Thou dost sit in judgment, nor will he be delivered when Thou dost condemn him. However, when it is not 'the sinner that is praised in the desires of his soul,

162 1 Pet. 5.5.
163 Ps. 17.14 et 8.
164 Cf. Isa. 14.13-15.
165 Luke 12.32.

nor the unjust man that is blessed,'[166] but a man is praised because of some gift which Thou gavest him—yet he rejoices more at the praise for himself than at possessing the gift which is the reason for the praise—then, indeed, he is praised while Thou dost blame him, and better then is he who has given praise than he who has received it. For, the gift of God present in a man was what pleased the former, but the gift of a man was more pleasing to the latter than was the gift of God.

Chapter 37

(60) We are tempted by these temptations every day, O Lord; we are tempted unceasingly. The human tongue is our daily 'furnace.'[167] Thou dost enjoin upon us continence in this kind of things, also; grant what Thou dost command, and command what Thou wilt. Thou knowest the groaning of my heart[168] to Thee and the flood of tears from my eyes over this matter. I cannot easily gather how for I am purged of this plague, and I have much fear of my hidden parts which Thy eyes know, but mine do not. In the other kinds of temptations, there is some sort of capacity by which I can investigate myself; in this, almost none. For, in regard to the pleasures of the flesh and curiosity to know idle things, I can see how much progress I may have made in the capacity to restrain my mind, when I am without these things, either voluntarily or because they are not at hand. For then I ask myself whether the privation is more or less troublesome for me.

166 Ps. 9.24.
167 I.e., a means of trying us; cf. Prov. 27.21.
168 Ps. 37.9.

As to riches,[169] which are sought in order to satisfy one of these three lusts, or two, or all of them: if the mind cannot detect whether it regards them with contempt when it possesses them, they can be put aside so that it may test itself.

But, when it comes to praise, what can we do to be deprived of it and to test ourselves in that condition? Are we to live wickedly, so forsaken and abandoned that no one will know us without detesting us? What greater insanity could be mentioned or thought? Yet, if praise both usually and properly accompanies a good life and good works, then the concomitant should no more be foregone than should the good life itself. Now, I cannot perceive whether I can be without something and be either undisturbed or disturbed, except when it is lacking.

(61) So, what can I confess to Thee in regard to this kind of tempation, O Lord? What, except that I am made joyful by praise? But, more by truth itself than by praise. For, if I were given my choice—whether I should prefer, on the one hand, to be out of my mind, or in error about all things and yet praised by all men, or, on the other, constant and most certain in truth and yet blamed by all—I see what I should choose. Nevertheless, I should not desire that approbation from the mouth of a stranger would increase my joy over any one of my goods. But, I admit that it does increase it; not only that, but blame decreases it.

When I am disturbed by this wretchedness of mine, an excuse surreptitiously occurs to me; of what value it is, Thou knowest, O God—it leaves me perplexed. Since Thou hast commanded for us not only continence, that is, from which things we must restrain our love, but also justice, that is, the

169 Augustine owned nothing at his death. Calling him 'God's pauper,' Possidius said that Augustine made no will, because he had nothing (*Vita S. Aug.* 31).

goal whereto we should direct it, and Thou hast wished not only that we should love Thee, but also our neighbor, I often appear to myself to be made joyful over the progress or promise shown by a neighbor, when I am delighted by the praise of an intelligent man; and again, I am made sorrowful over his evil, when I hear him blame either what he does not know or what is good.

I am also saddened sometimes by praise of myself, when either the things that are praised in me are such that I am displeased with them myself, or else slighter and less important things are judged to be greater than they should be reckoned. But, again, how do I know whether I am so affected because I do not wish my praiser to have a different opinion from my own, and this not because I am moved by his advantage, but because the same good things which are pleasing to me in myself are a greater source of joy to me when they also please another person? For, somehow, I am myself not praised when my judgment of myself is not praised, since these things are praised which displease me, or those are more praised which please me less. Am I not, then, uncertain of myself in regard to this matter?

(62) Behold, O Truth, I see in Thee that I should not be affected because of myself, but because of the advantage to my neighbor, when praise is directed to me. Yet, whether that is my way I do not know. In this matter, I know less about myself than I do about Thee. I beseech Thee, O my God, reveal me to myself, also, so that I may confess unto my brethren, who will pray for me, what wound I can find within myself. Let me again question myself more carefully. If I am moved by the advantage to my neighbor when I am praised, why am I less moved if someone else is unjustly blamed than if I am myself? Why am I more hurt by the reproach which is cast against myself than I am when the same iniquity is blamed on another person in my presence?

Am I ignorant of this, too? Is it to be concluded, finally, that I am deceiving myself[170] and that I am not telling the truth[171] before Thee in my heart or on my tongue? Put this madness far from me, O Lord; let not my own mouth be 'the oil of the sinner to fatten my own head.'[172]

Chapter 38

(63) 'I am needy and poor,'[173] yet it is better to be displeasing to myself in hidden groanings and to be seeking Thy mercy, until my deficiency is repaired and perfected for the peace which the eye of the proud man does not know. But, speech coming forth from the mouth, and deeds which make themselves known to men, present a most dangerous temptation, arising from the love of praise, which gathers approving opinions as a beggar does alms, for the sake of a certain personal importance. The temptation is active even when it is reproved by myself within myself, and for the very reason that it is reproved. Often, a man may become more vainglorious because of his very contempt for vainglory; thus, it is no longer because of contempt for glory that he glories, for, when he glories, he does not contemn it.

Chapter 39

(64) Within us again, within us there is still another evil belonging to the same class of temptation. By it, men become so proud that they are pleased with themselves no matter whether they fail to please or even displease

170 Cf. Gal. 6.3.
171 Cf. 1 John 1.6.
172 Cf. Ps. 140.5.
173 Ps. 108.22.

others, or do not care to please them. But, pleasing themselves, they displease Thee a great deal, because they not only regard as good what is not good, but also treat Thy goods as their own, or, if they do regard them as rising from their own merits or as rising from Thy grace, they do not rejoice in this grace with others, but envy that grace to others. Among all these and such dangers and trials, Thou seest the trembling of my heart, and I feel that my wounds will be healed by Thee ever and again rather than that they are not inflicted upon me any more.

Chapter 40

(65) When hast Thou not walked with me[174] O Truth, teaching what I must avoid and what I must seek, as I brought back my views of lower things[175] to Thee, in so far as I was able, and took counsel with Thee?

I have examined the world outside by means of sensation, in so far as I was able, and I have observed the life with which I animate my body, and the nature of my senses themselves. Then, I have gone into the hidden places of my memory, into those many spacious areas filled in wondrous ways with innumerable supplies, and I gazed and grew pale with astonishment. I could have perceived nothing pertaining to these without Thee, yet I found that none of them is Thou.

Nor was I myself Thou,[176] myself the discoverer, who

174 This chapter summarizes the previous part of the book.

175 For Augustine, the human mind turned to the consideration of mutable things is called the *ratio inferior;* directed to the contemplation of Eternal Truth, it is called the *ratio superior* (*De Trin.* 12.3.3); cf. Bourke, *Augustine's Quest of Wisdom* 215-217.

176 The thought of this long sentence depends on *eras tu,* which comes near the end of the Latin and makes an English rendering difficult.

surveyed all these things: I endeavored to mark them off from each other and to evaluate each of them in regard to their proper worth, taking some from the report of the senses and questioning them, perceiving some that were mingled with myself, distinguishing and enumerating these messengers of my impressions, then, amid the broad resources of memory, scrutinizing some things, storing some away, getting rid of others. Thou wert not myself when I did this, that is, my power whereby I did it, for Thou art an unchanging Light,[177] which I kept looking toward, in regard to all things, as to whether they existed, what they were,[178] how much they were to be valued: and I heard Thee teaching and commanding. And this same thing I do frequently: it gives me joy to take refuge in this pleasure, in so far as I can take a rest from necessary duties. In all these things which I run through in seeking Thy counsel, I find no safe place for my soul, except in Thee, where my scattered parts are gathered together and no portion of me may depart from Thee. Sometimes, Thou dost introduce me to a very unusual inner experience, to an indescribable sweetness, which, if it reaches perfection in me, will be beyond my present knowledge. But, it will not happen in this life,[179] for I fall back among these lower things, pulled down by troublous weights, and I am absorbed again in ordinary affairs. I am held fast and weep a great deal, but I am held quite firmly. So great is the burden of custom! Here, I am able to exist, but I do not want it; these, I wish to be, but I cannot; in regard to both, I am unhappy.

177 1 John 1.5.

178 Note that *an essent* and *quid essent* are two distinct questions for Augustine; the sentence is important in the metaphysical controversy over essence and existence.

179 This passage contains more than a suggestion of mystical experience. That the words resemble texts in Plotinus (cf. *Ennead.* 4.8.1) is no indication that the experience was unauthentic.

Chapter 41

(66) And so, I have considered the diseases of my sins in the three forms of lust and I have invoked Thy right hand[180] for my salvation. I have seen Thy splendor with my wounded heart, and, being dazzled, I have said: 'Who can attain that?' 'I am cast away from before Thy eyes.'[181] Thou art Truth presiding over all things. I, in my miserliness, did not want to lose Thee, but I wanted to possess a lie along with Thee, just as no one desires to say what is false in such a way that he might himself be ignorant of what is true.[182] Thus, I lost Thee, since Thou dost not deign to be possessed along with a lie.

Chapter 42

(67) Whom could I find to bring me back to Thy counsel? Should I have gone to the angels? By what prayer? By what rites? Many people who desire to return to Thee and are not strong enough of themselves, according to what I hear, have tried this, and they have fallen into the craving for curious visions and have deserved to be given over to illusions.[183]

Being proud, they have sought Thee in arrogance of learning, thrusting forth their breasts rather than beating them. They have drawn unto themselves, by virtue of likeness of

180 I.e., God's grace; cf. *Enarr. in ps.* 17.36.

181 Ps. 30.23.

182 The force of the example seems to be this: Just as a liar wishes both falsity (for others) and truth (for himself), so did Augustine wish both for God and for things which are in opposition to God.

183 Augustine is always critical of a cult of a nether world of propitiating demons. He is particularly bitter in regard to the demonolatry of Porphyry (*De civ. Dei.* 10.26-29).

heart, the 'princes of the air about us,'[184] kindred spirits and associates in arrogance. Seeking a mediator through whom they might be purged, when there was none, they were deceived by them through the powers of magic. For, it was 'Satan disguising himself as an angel of light.'[185] He greatly attracted their proud flesh, because he was not existing in a physical body.[186]

They were mortals and sinners, but Thou, O Lord, with whom they proudly sought to be reconciled, art immortal and without sin. A mediator between God and men[187] should possess something like unto God and something like unto men. Were he like men on both counts, he would be far from God; if like God on both points, he would be far away from men; so, he would not be a mediator. Therefore, this false mediator, by whom in Thy secret judgments pride deserved to be deluded, has one point of resemblance to men, namely, sin; he wishes to appear to possess another with God, namely, to make a show of himself as an immortal because he is not garbed in the mortality of flesh. But, since 'the wages of sin is death,'[188] he possesses in common with men that whereby, together with them, he is condemned to death.

Chapter 43

(68) However, the true Mediator, whom Thou hast shown to men in Thy secret mercy, and hast sent, so that, by His example, they might learn humility itself, that Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, appeared be-

184 Eph. 2.2.
185 2 Cor. 11.14.
186 Cf. *De Gen. ad. lit.* 11.13.17, for speculation on the aerial bodies of demons.
187 Cf. 1 Tim 2.5.
188 Rom. 6.23.

tween mortal sinners and the immortal just Being, sharing mortality with men and justice with God, so that, since the wage of justice is life and peace, He might, through justice joined with God, wipe out the death of sinners who have been justified, a death which He desired to possess in common with them. Was this Mediator shown forth to the saints of old, in order that they might be saved through their faith in His coming Passion, just as we are through faith in that Passion which has come to pass? In so far as He is Man, He is a Mediator. But, in so far as He is the Word, He is not an intermediary, because He is equal with God, God along with God, and at the same time one God.

(69) How Thou hast loved us, O good Father, 'who hast not spared even Thy only Son'[189] but hast handed Him over for us wicked men! How Thou hast loved us, for whom He 'thought it not robbery to be equal with Thee and became obedient unto death on the Cross.'[190] He alone was 'free among the dead,'[191] possessing the power to lay down His life and possessing the power to take it up again.[192] He was for us both a Victor and a Victim unto Thee—a Victor because a Victim—for us a Sacrificer[193] and a Sacrifice—a Sacrificer because a Sacrifice—making us change from slaves into sons unto Thee, by His being born of Thee and by becoming our slave. Rightly is my hope strong in Him, that Thou wilt heal all my diseases[194] through Him, who sits at Thy right hand and intercedes with Thee for us:[195] otherwise, I should despair. Many and great are my diseases, many are they and great, but mightier is Thy medicine. It would have been

189 Rom. 8.32.
190 Phil. 2.6,8.
191 Ps. 87.6.
192 Cf. John 10.18.
193 *sacerdos*: here translated as 'Sacrificer,' but its common meaning is 'priest'; cf. Heb. 7.27.
194 Ps. 102.3.
195 Cf. Rom. 8.34.

possible for us to form the opinion that Thy Word is far removed from any union with man, and thus to despair of ourselves, except for the fact that He did become flesh and dwell among us.[196]

(70) Terrified by my sins and by the mass of my wretchedness, I had stirred up the thought in my heart and had contemplated a flight into solitude,[197] but Thou didst forbid and reassure me, saying: Therefore did 'Christ die for all, that they who are alive may live no longer for themselves, but for Him Who died for them.'[198] Behold, O Lord, I cast my care upon Thee,[199] that I may live, and 'I will consider the wondrous things of Thy law.'[200] Thou knowest my inexperience and my weakness: teach me and heal me. He, Thine only Son, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and science,[201] hast redeemed me by His Blood. Let not the proud speak evil of me, for I think upon my ransom; I eat and drink and distribute It.[202] Myself poor, I desire to be filled with It, among those who eat and are filled: 'and they shall praise the Lord that seek Him.'[203]

---

196 John 1.14.
197 St. Jerome, Augustine's contemporary, retired to live in solitude in the Holy Land.
198 2 Cor. 5.15.
199 Cf. Ps. 54.23.
200 Ps. 118.18.
201 Cf. Col. 2.3.
202 Holy Eucharist.
203 Ps. 21.27.

BOOK ELEVEN

Chapter 1

SINCE ETERNITY is Thine, O Lord, dost Thou not know what I am saying to Thee, or dost Thou see what is going on in time, in relation to time? Why, then, do I tell Thee the detailed story of so many things? Certainly, not for Thee to learn them through me, but to arouse my feeling of love toward Thee, and that of those who read these pages, so that we may all say: 'Thou art great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised.'[1]

I have already said it,[2] and I shall say it again: in the love of Thy Love am I doing this. For, while indeed we pray, the Truth says: 'your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.'[3] So, we lay open our feeling of love by confessing to Thee our own miseries and Thy mercies upon us, so that Thou mayest deliver us completely. For, Thou hast started us out, so that we may cease to be wretched in our-

1 The literary effect of repeating these words of Ps. 95.4, with which the *Confessions* began, is to suggest both a new division of the *Confessions* and a continuation of the original theme of divine praise.

2 Cf. above, 10.2.2.

3 Matt. 6.8

selves and that we may become happy in Thee; Thou hast called us, so that we may be poor in spirit, meek, mournful, hungry and thirsty for justice, merciful, pure of heart, and peacemakers.[4]

Behold, I have told Thee many things, to the extent that I could and would, because Thou didst first will that I should confess unto Thee, my Lord God, 'for Thou art good, for Thy mercy endureth for ever.'[5]

Chapter 2

(2) But, when can the voice of my pen be adequate to the task of proclaiming all Thy encouragements, all Thy terrors, consolations, and guidances, whereby Thou hast brought me to the point of preaching Thy Word and administering Thy sacrament[6] to Thy people? And, if I am adequate to the task of setting them forth in orderly detail, then time's drops[7] are precious to me.

Now, I have for a long time been developing an ardent desire to meditate on Thy Law and to confess to Thee the extent of my knowledge and lack of skill[8] in it, the beginnings of Thy illumination and the things which remain in darkness

4 Matt. 5.3-9. Note that Augustine here reduces the eight beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount to seven, just as he does in the treatise, *De serm. Domini in monte* 1.3.10 (translated by D. J. Kavanagh in this series) where he correlates the Beatitudes with the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

5 Ps. 117.1.

6 Having been consecrated as bishop, at the end of the year 395, or the beginning of 396, Augustine is already exercising his episcopal powers at the time of writing this passage. Consult Possidius, *Vita Augustini* 3-8; Augustine, *Epist.* 21 (ad Valerium); and *Serm.* 339 (which is replete with autobiographical details).

7 The unceasing passing of instants of time is symbolized by the dropping of water in the clepsydra, or water-clock.

8 Not false modesty; Augustine was really puzzled by many points in holy Scripture, particularly in the Book of Genesis, which he now

for me, until my weakness may be engulfed in Thy strength. I do not want the hours to flow away which I find free from the necessary tasks of replenishing the body and of mental attention and service which we owe to men and that which we give even though we do not owe it.

(3) O Lord my God, 'be attentive to my prayer,'[9] and let Thy mercy hear my desire, because it burns with concern, not for myself only, but wishes to be of service in fraternal charity: and Thou dost see in my heart that it is so. May I offer up to Thee the service of my thought and tongue, and do Thou grant what I may offer to Thee. 'For I am needy and poor,'[10] while 'Thou art rich towards all who call upon Thee,'[11] Thou who, being without care, dost take care of us. From all temerity and all lying, circumcize my lips,[12] internal and external. Let Thy Scriptures be my chaste delights, to the end that I be not deceived in them and that I not deceive others through them. O Lord, listen and be merciful, O Lord my God, Light of the blind and Strength of the weak, and at the same time, Light of those who see and Strength of those who are strong, listen to my soul and hear it crying out from the depths.[13] For, if Thy ears are not present with us even in the depths, where shall we go? To what place shall we cry out?

'Thine is the day, and Thine is the night':[14] at Thy nod, the moments fly away. Be liberal in giving of them the time for our meditations on the secrets of Thy Law and do not

---

endeavors to explain in these last three books of the *Confessions*. Other major commentaries on Genesis are *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, written, 388-390; *De Genesi ad litteram, liber imperfectus*, written, 393; *De Genesi ad litteram, libri XII*, written 401-415; *De civitate Dei*, 11-12, written, 413-426.

9 Ps. 60.2.
10 Ps. 85.1.
11 Rom. 10.12.
12 Cf. Exod. 6.12.
13 Cf. Ps. 129.1.
14 Ps. 73.16.

close it against those who knock.[15] For, Thou didst not will so many pages of dark secrets[16] to be written in vain; nor are those forests without their stags,[17] taking refuge in them, recovering, walking about and feeding, lying down and ruminating. O Lord, perfect me and reveal those pages to me. Behold, Thy voice is my joy, Thy voice is greater than an abundance of pleasures. Grant what I love, for I do love it. And this love also Thou hast given. Abandon not Thy gifts, nor spurn Thy grass when it is thirsty. Let me confess unto Thee whatever I shall discover in Thy books, and 'may I hear the voice of Thy praise'[18] and drink Thee in and 'consider the wondrous things of Thy law,'[19] from the very beginning, when Thou didst make heaven and earth, unto the perpetual reign of Thy holy city with Thee.

(4) 'O Lord, have mercy on me and hear'[20] my desire. For, I am not thinking of anything on the earth, or of gold, silver, and precious stones, or attractive clothes, or honors, high positions, or pleasures of the flesh, or of what is needful to the body or to this our life of pilgrimage—all which are added to us when we seek Thy kingdom and Thy justice.[21]

See, O my God, whence arises my desire. 'The wicked have told me their pleasures, but not as Thy law,'[22] O Lord. See, it is from this[23] that my desire arises. See, O Father, look and see and approve. May it be pleasing in the sight of Thy mercy for me to find grace before Thee, so that the inner parts of Thy words may be opened unto me as I knock. I beg it through our Lord, Jesus Christ, Thy Son, 'the Man of

15 Cf. Matt. 7.7.
16 On the mysterious character of holy Scripture, cf. *De vera relig.* 17-33.
17 The stag (Ps. 28.9) in the forest is, for Augustine, symbolic of the man who resists temptation and error, as the stag resists snakes. Cf. *Enarr. in ps.* 28.
18 Ps. 25.7.
19 Ps. 118.18.
20 Ps. 26.7.
21 Cf. Matt. 6.33.
22 Ps. 118.85.
23 I.e., from God's Law as expressed in Scripture.

Thy right hand, the Son of man Whom Thou hast confirmed for Thyself,'[24] as Thy Mediator and ours before Thee, through whom Thou didst seek us out when we were not seeking Thee, but Thou didst seek so that we might seek Thee—Thy Word, through whom Thou hast made all things, including also myself—Thy only Son, through whom Thou hast called unto adoption the society[25] of believers, including also myself. I beseech Thee through Him 'Who sits at Thy right hand' and intercedes with Thee for us, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and science.[26] These do I seek in Thy books. Moses wrote about Him:[27] He says this Himself; the Truth says this.

Chapter 3

(5) Let me hear and understand how in the beginning Thou didst 'make heaven and earth.'[28] Moses wrote this; he wrote it and went away; he passed hence, from Thee to Thee, and now he is not before me. For, if he were, I should hold him, and beg him, and beseech him through Thee to throw these words open before me. I would offer the ears of my body to the sounds bursting forth from his mouth. If he were to speak in Hebrew, it would impinge upon my sense to no avail, nor would any part of it reach my mind,[29] but,

---

24 Ps. 79.18.

25 *populum*: for Augustine, a 'people' is 'an assembly of many rational beings associated in harmonious and common participation in the things they love' (*De civ. Dei* 19.24).

26 Cf. John 1.3; Rom. 8.34; Col. 2.3.

27 Cf. John 5.46.

28 Gen. 1.1.

29 Augustine seems to have had little direct acquaintance with the Hebrew language; he knew some Punic, however, and this enabled him to make conjectures as to the meaning of Biblical names and common Semitic roots. See his *Locutiones in Heptateuchum VII*, written, 419; cf. H. J. Vogels, 'Die heilige Schrift bei Augustinus,' *Aurelius Augustinus* (Köln 1930) 414-420; O. Rottmanner, 'Zur Sprachenkenntnis des hl. Augustinus,' *Theol. Quartalschrift* 12 (1895) 269.

if in Latin, I should know what he said. But, from what source would I know whether he told the truth? And, if I did know even this, would I come to know it from him? Inside myself, in fact, inside in the dwelling place of cogitation, truth,[30] which is neither Hebrew, Greek, Latin, nor any foreign language, would say, without the instrumentality of mouth or tongue and without the sound of syllables: 'He tells the truth,' and I would immediately say to that servant of Thine, with confidence in my certainty: 'You are telling the truth.'

So, since I cannot ask this question of Moses, I ask Thee, by whom he was filled with the truths he has told. O Truth, O my God, I beseech Thee, 'spare my sins,'[31] and Thou who hast granted to that servant of Thine to say these things, grant unto me, also, the ability to understand them.

Chapter 4

(6) See, heaven and earth do exist; they cry out that they have been made; for they undergo change and variation.[32] Now, in the case of any being whatever that was not made and yet is, there is nothing in it that was not there before; for this latter is the condition of being changed and varied.

They also cry out that they have not made themselves: 'The reason why we exist is that we have been made; therefore, we did not exist, before we were in being, in such a way that we could have been made by ourselves.' And the voice of the speakers is their own evident appearance.

30 This is another important text on the doctrine of the indwelling of Truth in man's soul; the teaching is more fully developed in *De magistro* 12.38; cf. Gilson, *Introduction* (2me éd., 1943) 88-130.

31 Job. 14.16.

32 Cf. above, 10.11.17.

So, Thou, O Lord, didst make them: Thou who art beautiful, for they are beautiful; Thou who art good, for they are good;[33] Thou who doth exist,[34] for they exist, too. Yet, they are not beautiful, they are not good, they do not exist, in the same way as Thou, their Creator; in comparison with Thee, they are neither beautiful, nor good, nor do they even exist. We know this, thanks to Thee, yet our knowledge, in comparison with Thy knowledge, is but ignorance.

Chapter 5

(7) Now, how didst Thou make heaven and earth, and what was the mechanism of such a great working of Thine? For, it was not like a human artificer, who forms one body from another, by taking thought within his soul—which is capable of imposing any form which it discerns in its very nature with its inner eyes (and how would it be capable of this, unless Thou hadst made it so?)—and who then imposes the form on something already existing and is in possession of being, for instance, on earth, on stone, on wood, on gold, or anything whatever of that sort. Where would these things come from, if Thou hadst not created them? It is Thou who didst make a body for the artisan, a mind which controls his members, a matter from which he makes any-

33 The Platonism of this passage is evident: all the many, lower beautiful things are inexplicable without the One, Supreme Beauty; so, too, are the goods in relation to the Form of Goodness, Cf. R. Arnou, 'Platonisme des Pères,' *DTC* 12, col. 2258-2392.

34 Augustine's *qui es* is, of course, the *Qui Sum* of Exod. 3.14; cf. *De Trin.* 5.2.3; *Enarr. in ps.* 101. *Serm.* 2.10. For an explanation of this teaching, cf. M. Schmaus, *Die psychologische Trinitätslehre des hl. Augustinus* (Münster i. W. 1927) 82-85. On the importance of Exod. 3.14, from Augustine onward in Christian thought, cf. Gilson, *Le Thomisme* (5me éd., Paris 1944) 76-87.

thing, a talent whereby to grasp his art[35] and see within what he may make externally, a bodily sense as a medium through which he may project his artefact from mind to matter and bring back a report of what has been made to the mind, so that he may consult the truth presiding within himself as to whether it has been well made.

All these things praise Thee as the Creator of all. But, how dost Thou make them? How, my God, didst Thou make heaven and earth? Certainly, Thou didst not make heaven and earth, in the heavens, or on the earth, nor yet in the air, or upon the waters,[36] since these also belong to heaven and earth. Nor didst Thou make the whole world in the whole world, because there was no place where it might be made, before it was made to exist. Nor didst Thou hold anything in Thy hand from which to make heaven and earth, for, from where would that matter, not made by Thee, have come to Thee, wherefrom Thou mightest make something? For, what exists which does not depend on the fact that Thou art? And so, Thou didst 'speak and they were made,'[37] and in Thy Word didst Thou make them.

Chapter 6

(8) But, how didst Thou speak? Was it in the same way that a voice was produced from the heavens, saying: 'This

35 *Ars* is that level of the soul's activity which is just above *sensus* and just below *virtus* (*De quant. animae* 33.72). Thus, for Augustine, *ars* is the function of the soul by which it becomes rationally productive; not merely imagination, as many annotators of this passage suggest, quoting *De Gen. c. Manich.* 1.8.13. Cf. E. Chapman, *St. Augustine's Philosophy of Beauty* (New York 1939) 67-82.

36 The theory of four elements (earth, air, fire, water) is in Augustine's mind as he writes this. The heavens, or sky, replaces fire, here. However, the sky is the abode of the fiery bodies of the stars, and so the theory is not essentially modified by the substitution.

37 Ps. 32.9.

is my beloved Son?'[38] That voice was produced and then was completed; it began and it ended. The syllables sounded and then they passed away; the second followed the first, the third followed the second, and so on in order, until the last syllable followed the rest; then, silence followed the last. From this it is clear and evident that the movement of a creature[39] produced it, in obedience to Thy eternal will, but itself in the temporal order. And the external ear reported these words of Thine, which were made for time, to the prudently reasoning mind[40] whose internal ear is attuned to Thy eternal Word. But this mind compared these words which sound in time with Thy Word, eternal in its silence, and it proclaimed: 'It is different; it is far different. These words are far below me; they do not even exist, for they are fleeting and transitory: "But the Word of My God endureth above me forever." '[41]

So, if Thou didst say by means of sounding and transitory words that heaven and earth were to come into being, and in that way made heaven and earth, there was already a corporeal creature existing before heaven and earth, and that voice took its temporal course through the temporal movements of that creature. Now, there was no body existing before heaven and earth, or, if there were, then certainly Thou hadst made it, without a transitory voice whereby to make a transitory voice by which Thou mightest say that heaven

38 Matt. 3.17.

39 Augustine is noted in theology for his view that all apparitions of God to man, other than the Incarnation, were effected through the mediation of creatures, i.e., angels. Cf. *De Trin.* 4.21.31; cf. Bourke, *Augustine's Quest of Wisdom* 205. Possibly (as Gibb-Montgomery suggest, *Conf.*, p. 339.2) Augustine has reference to the transmission of sound in the air, which is a part of created nature.

40 As one of the four cardinal virtues, prudence is a good quality of the rational soul, enabling it to consult the immutable rules in the Wisdom of God, and thus make a good practical choice (*De lib. arb.* 2.19.52).

41 Cf. Isa. 40.8.

and earth were to come into being. For, whatever that thing might be, from which such a voice might be produced, it would not have existed at all unless it had been made by Thee. What Word, then, didst Thou use to create that body whereby those words might be produced?

Chapter 7

(9) And so, Thou dost call upon us to understand the Word which is God along with Thee, O God, which is spoken sempiternally, and in which all things are said sempiternally. For there is no ending in Its speech, in the sense that one thing has been said, and then another is said, so that all could be said; rather, all are together and in eternity. Otherwise, it is already time, and change, and not true eternity,[42] or true immortality.

This I know, O my God, and 'I give thanks.'[43] I know and I confess unto Thee, O Lord, and whoever is not unthankful for the assured Truth knows it along with me and blesses Thee. We do know, O Lord, we know that in so far as anything which was in existence stops existing, and anything which was not in existence starts existing, to that extent does it die or come into being. And so, no part of Thy Word ceases, or takes the place of another, for It is indeed immortal[44] and eternal. And so it is by the Word, co-eternal with Thee, that Thou dost say, at once and eternally, what Thou dost say, and whatever Thou dost say that it is to be made is made. Nor dost Thou make in any other way than by

42 That there is no succession of moments in eternity, cf. *De div. quaest.* LXXXIII q. 19; and *Enarr. in ps.* 101 10.

43 1 Cor. 1.4.

44 Augustine frequently uses 'immortal' loosely, in the sense of 'everlasting.'

saying; yet, all the things which Thou dost make by saying do not come into being at once and eternally.[45]

Chapter 8

(10) Why, I entreat Thee, O Lord my God? I see it to some extent, but I do not know how to express it, unless it be that everything which begins to be, or ceases to be, begins and ceases to be at that very time at which it is known in the Eternal Reason that it should begin or cease, while in It nothing either begins or ceases. For, It is Thy Word which is also the Beginning,[46] for so does He speak to us. Thus, in the Gospel, He spoke through the flesh and this was conveyed by external sounds to the ears of men, that it might be believed and sought within, and discovered in the eternal Truth, in which the good and only Teacher[47] teaches all His disciples.

There do I hear Thy voice, O Lord, as of one speaking to me, because He who teaches us does speak to us, but he who does not teach us does not really speak to us, even if he does speak. Now, then, who teaches us, except the stable Truth? Because, even when we are admonished by mutable creation, we are brought to the stable Truth, where we truly learn, as we 'stand and listen to Him and rejoice exceedingly at the voice of the Bridegroom,'[48] restoring ourselves to the

45 That is, the divine act of creating is in eternity, but the products of this act exist in time.

46 Cf. John 8.25; Augustine takes *principium* (*Gr. archê*) to mean Christ; cf. the reading taken from the Clementine Vulgate (*New Testament*, Paterson 1941, p. 268, note to John 8.25): 'I am the beginning, I who speak with you.' Cf. *Tract. in Joan.* 38.11.

47 Christ is the only true Teacher (Matt. 23.9-10), as Augustine makes plain, *De magistro* 11.38-12.39. Cf. the noted sermon of St. Bonaventure, *De humanae cognitionis ratione* [Quaracchi 1883] 73-84, for a thirtenth-century statement of Augustine's position (S. Bonaventure on the text, '*Unus est magister vester, Christus*' (Matt. 28.10),

48 Cf. John 3.29.

Source whence we came. And so He is the Principle,[49] for, unless He remained, there would be nothing to return to, when we wander off in error. But, when we return from error it is certainly by acquiring knowledge that we return; now, in order that we may know, He teaches us, for He is the Principle and He speaks to us.

Chapter 9

(11) In this Principle, O God, hast Thou made heaven and earth in Thy Word, in Thy Son, in Thy Power, in Thy Wisdom, in Thy Truth—speaking in a wondrous way and making in a wondrous way. Who will understand it? Who will give an account of it? What is that Light which shines intermittently within me and pierces my heart without any wound? I am moved to feel both terror and ardor: I feel terror in so far as I am unlike it, ardor in so far as I am like it. Wisdom, it is Wisdom Itself which comes at times to enlighten me, cutting through my beclouded darkness which again covers me up, because I am weakened by that cloud and by the piling up of my punishments. Thus is my strength wasted away in insufficiency,[50] so that I cannot bear my good, until Thou, O Lord, 'Who forgiveth all my iniquities, wilt even heal all my diseases, for Thou also shalt redeem my life from destruction, and shalt crown me with compassion and mercy and shalt satisfy my desire with good things, because my youth shall be renewed like the eagle's.'[51] 'For in hope were we saved,' and for Thy promises 'we wait with

49 Both 'beginning' (in the preceding paragraph) and 'principle' (in this paragraph) are used to translate the Latin *principium*.
50 Cf. Ps. 30.11.
51 Cf. Ps. 102.3-5; Augustine either had very different readings, or he modified the text in this passage. Cf. *Enarr. in. ps.* 102 5, where the text of verses 3-5 is almost identical with the Vulgate.

patience.'[52] Let him who can, hear Thee discoursing within him! I myself cry out in confidence arising from Thy oracle: 'How magnified are Thy works, O Lord; Thou hast made all things in wisdom!'[53] This Wisdom is the Principle and in this Beginning hast Thou made heaven and earth.[54]

Chapter 10

(12) Now,[55] are those people not full of the 'old Enemy'[56] who ask us; 'What did God do before He made heaven and earth?'[57] 'For, if He were idle,' they say, 'and did not work, why did He not remain so, always and forever, just as before He had abstained constantly from working? For, if any new motion sprang up in God, and a new will to establish the world of creatures, which He had never before established, how, then, is it a true eternity when a will-act, which did not exist, arises? The will of God is not a creature, but is prior to creation, since nothing would be created if the will of the Creator did not precede it. So, His will pertains to the very substance of God. And if anything arose in the substance of God, which did not exist before, that substance is not truthfully called eternal. But, if God's will that creation should exist were eternal, why, then, is creation not also eternal?'

---

52 Cf. Rom. 8.24-25.

53 Ps. 103.24.

54 Cf. Prov. 4.7.

55 This is the start of an important passage (12-16) on the relationship of eternity to God; it forms a transition to the discussion of time. See the remarks of Cayré, *Initiation* 177.

56 Literally, 'full of oldness,' but Augustine equates *vetustas* with *carnalitas* (*Serm.* 267.2.)

57 The Manichaeans asked this question; cf. *De Gen. c. Manich.* 1.2.4; for Augustine's most complete answer, cf. *De civ. Dei* 11.6.

Chapter 11

(13) Those who say these things do not understand Thee as yet, O Wisdom of God,[58] Light of minds; they do not yet understand how things are done, which are done through Thee and in Thee. They try to get the taste of eternal things, but their heart still flutters in the past and future fluctuations of things and is still vain.[59]

Who will hold it[60] and keep it still, so that it may stand for a little while and catch for a moment the splendor of eternity which stands still forever, and compare this with temporal moments which never stand still, and see that it is incomparable. It may see, too, that a long time cannot become long, except by virtue of many passing motions which cannot be prolonged together; while in eternity nothing passes away, but the whole is present. Now, no part of time is wholly present. So, it may see that every part of the past is forced out by the future, and every part of the future follows upon the past, and every past and future moment is created and flows from That which is the everlasting Present? Who will hold the heart of man, that it may stand and see how eternity, as it stands still and is neither past nor future, determines future and past times?

Is my hand capable of this, or can the 'hand' of my mouth do such a great task by means of words?

---

58 Cf. 1 Cor. 1.24.
59 Cf. Ps. 5.10.
60 In this sentence, and frequently throughout the paragraph, 'it' means the heart.

Chapter 12

(14) Here is my answer to him[61] who says: 'What did God do before He made heaven and earth?'

I do not give that answer which some man is said to have offered as a jest, evading the force of the question: 'He was making hell ready,' he said, 'for those who pry into these deep questions!' It is one thing to see; quite another thing to laugh. This is not my answer. Now, I should much prefer to reply: 'I do not know,' when I really do not know, than [to accept] the answer which gives occasion to ridicule a man who asked a profound question and commendation of one who gave a false answer.

But, I say that Thou, our God, art the Creator of every creature, and, if every creature be understood under the name, heaven and earth, then I make bold to say this: before God made heaven and earth, He did not make anything. For, if He made anything, what did He make, except a creature? And I wish I knew every useful thing I yearn to know as well as I know that no creature was made before any creature was made.[62]

Chapter 13

(15) But, if any flighty mind is wandering backwards through images of different periods of time, and if he is amazed that Thou, the all-powerful, all-creating and all-sustaining God, the Artificer of heaven and earth, desisted throughout uncountable ages, from so great a work, before

61 *Ecce respondeo dicenti*: this phrase may have some historical relation to the famous formula, *Respondeo dicendum,* with which every answer in St. Thomas' *Summa Theologica* begins.

62 Without stating the principle of non-contradiction formally, Augustine indicates here that he realizes its full force.

making it, then let him wake up and pay attention, for he is amazed at falsities.

Indeed, how could uncountable ages pass by, which Thou hadst not made, when Thou art the Author and Creator of all ages?[63] Or, what periods of time existed, which were not established by Thee? Or, how could they have passed away, if they never existed?

Therefore, since Thou art the Maker of all periods of time, if there were any time before Thou madest heaven and earth, why is it said that Thou didst rest[64] from work? For, Thou hadst made time itself, and no periods of time could pass by, before Thou madest the periods of time. If, on the contrary, there was no time before heaven and earth, why the question: What didst Thou make 'then'? For, there was no 'then' when there was no time.

(16) Nor dost Thou precede in time[65] the periods of time. Rather, Thou dost precede all past periods, in the sublimity of an ever-present eternity, and Thou dost extend beyond all future periods because they are yet to be, and, when they come, they will be past periods; 'but Thou art always the Selfsame, and Thy years shall not fail.'[66] Thy years do not come and go; while these years of ours do come and go, in order that they all may come. All Thy years stand together,[67] for they stand still, nor are those going away cut off by those coming, for they do not pass away, but these years of ours shall all be when they are all no more. Thy years are

63 Cf. Heb. 1.2.

64 Cf. Gen. 2.3.

65 Here begins the formal section of a long investigation (13-30) of the nature of time. For an analysis of its philosophic implications, cf. Cayré *Initation* 177-178; on its Neo-Platonic affinities, cf. J. Guitton, *Le temps et l'éternité chez Plotin et s. Augustin* (Paris 1933); J. F. Callahan, *Four Views of Time in Ancient Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass. 1948)

66 Ps. 101.28.

67 *simul*: has an intentionally bivalent meaning, 'together and in one non-extended instant.' Cf. *Enarr. in ps.* 106 10.

but one day,[68] and Thy day is not a daily recurrent, but today; Thy present day does not give place to tomorrow, nor, indeed, does it take the place of yesterday. Thy present day is eternity; so, Thou didst generate a co-eternal Being, to whom Thou didst say: 'This day have I begotten Thee.'[69] Thou hast made all periods of time and Thou art before all periods of time, and there never was a time when time did not exist.

Chapter 14

(17) So, at no time hadst Thou not made anything, for Thou hadst made time itself. And no periods of time are coeternal with Thee, for Thou dost abide, but they, if they abided, would not be periods of time.

For, what is time?[70] Who can explain it easily and briefly? Who can grasp this, even in cogitation, so as to offer a verbal explanation of it? Yet, what do we mention, in speaking, more familiarly and knowingly than time? And we certainly understand it when we talk about it; we even understand it when we hear another person speaking about it.

What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know; but, if I want to explain it to a questioner, I do not know. Yet, I say with confidence that I know that, if nothing passed away,

---

68 Cf. 2 Pet. 3.8.

69 Ps 2.7.

70 A famous question in philosophy. Plato had answered (*Timaeus* 38) that time is the image of eternity, produced in the moving heavens by the World-Maker. Aristotle defined time (*Physics* 5.11; 220a24) as the number of movement in respect of the before and after. This definition is severely criticized by Plotinus (*Ennead.* 3.7.9-13), who regards time as a formal characteristic of the activity of soul (*Ennead.* 3.7.8-12). Augustine is much influenced by the theory of Plotinus, but he also seems to suggest that there may be a non-subjective time, in the real order, which the human soul may use as a standard of temporal judgments. In this, he may be returning to Plato, as Proclus did later: *Elements of Theology,* Prop. 53-54 (ed. E. R. Dodds, Oxford 1933) 50-53.

there would be no past time; if nothing were coming, there would be no future time; and if nothing were existing, there would be no present time.

Then, how do those two periods of time, the past and the future, exist, when the past is already not existing, and the future does not yet exist? And again, the present would not pass away into the past, if it were always present; indeed, it would not be time but eternity. So, if the present, in order to be time, must be such that it passes over into the past, then, how can we say that it *is;* for, the sole reason for its existence is the fact that it will stop being, that is to say, can we not truly say that time *is,* only because it inclines not to be?

Chapter 15

(18) Still, we speak of a long time and a short time, and we only say this of the past or future. For instance, we call a hundred years ago a long past time, and, likewise, a hundred years ahead a long future time. But, we say, for example, that ten days ago is a short past time, and ten days hence is a short future. But, how is something long or short which does not exist? For, the past does not now exist and the future does not yet exist. So, let us not say: it *is* long; rather, let us say of past time: it *was* long; and of the future: it *will be* long.

My Lord, my Light,[71] will not Thy Truth here also make sport of man? For, was that past time long, in the sense that it was long when already past, or when it was still present? Of course, it could have been long only at the time when that existed which was capable of being long, but as past, it was already not existing; hence, it could not be long, for it was wholly non-existent.

71 Cf. Mich. 7.8; Ps. 26.1; 1 John 1.5.

So, let us not say past time was long; for, we will discover nothing which could have been long, since, from the fact that it is past, it does not exist. Rather, let us say: 'That present time was long,' for, when it was present, it was long. For, it had not yet passed away into non-existence, and so there was something which could be long. But, once it passed away, it also ceased immediately to be long, for it ceased to be.[72]

(19) Let us see, then, O human soul, whether present time can be long; for the ability to perceive periods of time, and to measure them, has been given thee. What wilt thou answer me?

Is a hundred present years a long time? First of all, see whether there can be a hundred present years. If the first of these years is going on, it is present, but ninety-nine are still in the future, and so they do not yet exist. But, if the second year is going on, one is already past, another is present, and the rest are in the future. And this is so, no matter which of the intervening years of this century we take to be present: the preceding years will be past, the succeeding ones future. For that reason, there cannot be a hundred present years.

Now, see whether even the one which is going on may itself be present. If, now, the first month in it is going on, the rest are future; if the second is, then the first is now past and the rest do not yet exist. Therefore, the year which is now going on is not present as a whole, and, if it is not present as a whole, then the year is not present. For, a year is twelve months, and whatever one of these months is now going on, that one is present; the rest are either past or future. Yet, neither is the month which is now going on present, but one day: if the first, the rest are future; if the last, the rest

72 While this discussion may seem rather complicated, the reader is asked to compare Hegel's famous remarks on the 'this' and the 'now' (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in the translation by J. B. Baillie, London 1931, 151-152, 155-160) before accusing Augustine of undue subtlety.

are past; if any intermediate one, it is between the past and future ones.

(20) See how the present time, which we found the only one worthy of being called long, has been contracted to scarcely the extent of one day. But, let us look at this carefully, for not even one day is present as a whole. It is made up of all twenty-four hours of night and day. The first of these regards the rest as future, the last one regards them as past; and the intermediate ones are, to those preceding, as to the past; to those coming after, as to the future. And this one hour itself goes on by means of fleeting little parts: whatever part of it has flown by is the past; whatever remains to it is the future. If one can conceive any part of time which could not be divided into even the most minute moments, then, that alone is what may be called the present; and this flies over from the future into the past so quickly that it does not extend over the slightest instant. For, if it has any extension, it is divided into past and future. But, the present has no length.[73]

Where, then, is the time which we may call long? Is it the future? In fact, we do not say: it is long, for it does not yet exist, so as to be long; rather, we say: it will be long. When will it be so? For, if at a certain instant when it will be still the future, then it will not be long, because that which is capable of being long does not yet exist. But, if it will be long at the instant when it will just start to exist, as something from the non-existent future, and will have become the present, in order that it be something that could be long—then, in our remarks above, present time cries out that is cannot be long!

---

73 *nullum habet spatium*: Augustine uses *spatium* both for extension in space and duration in time.

Chapter 16

(21) Nevertheless, O Lord, we do perceive intervals of time; we compare them among themselves, and we say that some are longer and others shorter. We even measure how much longer or shorter one period of time is than another; we can answer that this period is double or triple, while that is single, that is, just as long as another. But, we measure periods of time as they are passing by; we do this measuring at the time of sense perception. So, who can measure the past periods which are already out of existence, or the future ones which do not yet exist—unless, perhaps, someone is going to dare to say that the non-existent can be measured? Therefore, while time is passing into the past, it can be perceived and measured; but, when it has passed away, it cannot, for it does not exist.

Chapter 17

(22) I am looking for information, O Father, not making an affirmation: O my God, counsel me and rule me.[74]

Who is there who will tell me that there are not three periods of time (just as we learned when children and as we have taught the children[75]): past, present and future, but that there is only the present because the other two do not exist? Or, do they also exist, but, when the present comes out of the future, does it proceed from something secret, and, when the past comes about from the present, does it recede into something hidden? Indeed, where have the people who have foretold the future seen those things, if they are not yet in existence? For, what does not exist cannot be seen. And those

74 Ps. 22.1; 27.9.
75 Augustine spent a year as a teacher of elementary grammar, in Tagaste: cf. above, 4.4.7; 6.7.11.

who tell about past events would certainly not tell the truth, if they did not see these things with their mind. And if these were not in existence, they could not be seen at all. Therefore, both future things and past things do exist.

Chapter 18

(23) Permit me, O Lord, to seek further information; 'O my Hope,'[76] let not my effort be confounded.

If future and past things exist, I would like to know where they are. And, if that is impossible for me, at least I do know that, wherever they are, they are not there as future or past things, but as present. For, if they are there also as future things, they are not yet there; and, if they are there as past things, they are already not there. So, wherever they are, whatever they are, they do not exist unless as present things. Yet, when past things are recounted as true, they are brought forth from memory, not as the actual things which went on in the past, but as words formed from images of these things; and these things have left their traces, as it were, in the mind while passing through sense perception. In fact, my boyhood, which is not now in existence, is in past time, which does not now exist; but, when I recall and tell about it, I see its image in present time, for it is still in my memory.

Whether the same explanation also may be given for the prediction of things so that presently existing images of things which do not yet exist are perceived beforehand, I confess, O my God, that I do not know. This I know clearly: we often think ahead about our future actions and this premeditation is present, while the action which we think over beforehand is not yet in existence, for it is in the future. When we shall have reached it and have begun to do what we

76 Ps. 70.5.

were thinking of before, then that action will be in existence, since it will then be not in the future but present.

(24) So, in whatever way this mysterious pre-perception of future things goes on, it is not possible for a thing to be seen unless it is something existing. What exists[77] now is not a future thing, but present. Therefore, when future things are said to be seen, the things themselves which do not yet exist, that is, the future things, are not seen, but rather their causes or signs, perhaps, which now exist. And so, they are not future things, but things now present to those who are seeing, from which they foretell future things as conceived by their mind. Again, these conceptions exist now, and those who predict such things see them as present within themselves.

Now, let the abundance of such cases suggest some example to me.

I see the dawn: I foretell that the sun will rise. What I see is present, what I foretell is future; not that the sun is future—it exists now—but rather its rising which is not yet occurring. Yet, unless I form an image in my mind of this rising, as I do at this instant when I speak about it, I could not predict it. But the dawn which I see in the sky is not the rising of the sun, though it precedes it, nor is the act of forming the image in my mind that rising; these two[78] present things are discerned so that that future thing may be foretold.

Therefore, future things do not yet exist, and, if they do not yet exist, they are not existing; if they are not existing, they cannot possibly be seen. But, they can be predicted from present things which already exist and are seen.

77 *quod est* becomes a technical expression in early mediaeval metaphysics; it usually names the existing real thing, as contrasted with the *quo est,* which is often just the abstract, universal essence. It is with Boethius and Gilbert de la Porrée that this terminology becomes established; cf. Gilson, 'Notes sur le vocabulaire de l'Etre,' *Mediaeval Studies* 8 (1946) 150-158.

78 The two things are the dawn and the image of the rising sun.

Chapter 19

(25) And so, what is the mode[79] by which Thou, the Ruler of Thy creation, dost teach souls about things which are to be in the future? For, Thou hast taught Thy prophets. What, then, is this mode by which Thou teachest the things of the future—Thou to whom nothing is to come? Or, is it rather that Thou teachest present things about future events? For, that which does not exist cannot, of course, be taught. This mode it too far away from my mental gaze; it has become too great for me, I cannot reach it; but with They help I can,[80] when Thou wilt grant it, O sweet Light of my hidden eyes.[81]

Chapter 20

(26) What is now plain and clear is that neither future nor past things are in existence, and that it is not correct to say there are three periods of time: past, present and future. Perhaps it would be proper to say there are three periods of time: the present of things past, the present of things present, the present of things future. For, these three are in the soul and I do not see them elsewhere: the present of things past is memory; the present of things present is immediate vision;[82] the present of future things is expectation. If we are

---

79 *modus*: here the divine way of doing, or regulating, an action; cf. above, Bk. 4 n. 57, for a broader meaning.

80 Cf. Ps. 138.6. Punctuating with Skutella: *invaluit ex me, non potero ad illum*. Others attach '*ex me* not to '*invaluit*' but to the following.

81 Cf. Ps. 37.11. Speaking of the 'interior eye,' Augustine says (*Tract. in Joan.* 13.3): 'these eyes are in the intelligence [*in intelligentia*], these eyes are in the mind [*in mente*].'

82 *contuitus*: here translated as as 'immediate vision.' This sentence sets the theme for a recent book on the *Confession*: J. M. Le Blond, *Les conversions de saint Augustin* (Paris 1950). Following a suggestion made in 1936 by P. L. Landsberg, Le Blond argues that the first

permitted to say this, I see three periods of time and I admit there are three.

Still, it may be said three periods of time do exist—past, present and future—just as custom falsely put it; it may be so expressed. See, I do not care, or make any opposition or criticism—provided the statement be understood: that there is no existing now either of what is to be in the future or that which is past. There are few things which we express properly; more frequent are those that we express improperly, though making our intentions understood.

Chapter 21

(27) So, I said, a little while ago, that, as periods of time are passing by, we measure them, being thus able to say that this period of time is double that single one, or this is just as long as that, and whatever else we can express by measuring concerning the relationship of the parts of time.

For this reason, as I was saying, we do measure periods of time as they are passing by. If anyone say to me: 'How do you know this?' I may reply: 'I know, because we do measure them, and we cannot measure things which do not exist, yet past and future things do not exist.' But, how do we measure present time, when it has no length? Therefore, it is measured as it is passing by, when it has passed away, it is not measured, for, what might be measured will not then exist.

---

nine books of the *Confessions* are an exercise in memory (*memoria*), the tenth book is a vision (*contuitus*) of Augustine's present, while the last three are a looking forward (*exspectatio*) to the future and the eternal meaning of creation. The purpose of this interpretation is to stress the unity of theme in all thirteen books. P. Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin* (Paris 1950) already has questioned the validity of the Landsberg-Le Blond thesis; cf. Courcelle, p. 21 n. 3.

But, whence, by what way, and whither does it pass, when it is measured? Whence, but from the future? By what means, but through the present? Whither, if not into the past? From that, then, which does not yet exist, through that which is without length, into that which is already out of existence.

But, what do we measure, if not time in some length? For, we cannot talk about single, double, triple, and equal periods—and whatever else we say about time in this way—except in terms of lengths of time. In what length, then, do we measure time as it is passing away? Is it in the future, from which it is passing? But, we do not measure what does not yet exist. Is it in the present, by which it is passing? But, we do not measure a thing of no length. Is it in the past, to which it is passing? But, we do not measure what is already out of existence

Chapter 22

(28) My mind burns with eagerness to gain knowledge of this complicated problem. Do not hide—O Lord my God, O good Father, I beseech Thee through Christ—do not hide these familiar, yet mysterious, things from my desire, so that it cannot enter deeply into them; rather, may they be illumined by Thy enlightening mercy, O Lord. Whom shall I ask about these things? To whom shall I more fruitfully confess my lack of skill than to Thee, before whom my strongly burning interest in Thy Scriptures is not offensive? Grant what I love: for I do love it. And this love also Thou hast given. Grant it, O Father, who truly knoweth how to give good gifts to Thy children;[83] grant it, for I have taken on the task of knowing it, and it is labor in my sight,[84] until Thou dost reveal it. I beseech Thee through Christ, in the Name of Him

83 Cf. Matt. 7.11.
84 Cf. Ps. 72.16.

who is most holy, let no one interrupt me. 'I have believed, therefore do I speak.'[85] This is my hope, for this do I live, 'that I may see the delight of the Lord.'[86] Behold, Thou hast made my days grow old,[87] and they pass away—how, I know not.

We speak of this time and that time, of these times and those times: 'How long ago did he say this? How long is it since he did this?' and: 'What a long time since I have seen it,' and: 'This syllable takes twice as long a time as that short one.' We both say and hear these things, and we understand and make ourselves understood by others. They are very obvious and most familar, but, on the other hand, they are deeply hidden and their discovery is a present problem.

Chapter 23

(29) I have heard from a certain learned man that the movements of the sun, moon, and stars are times, yet I did not agree. For, why are not times rather the movements of all bodies? As a matter of fact, if the heavenly bodies stopped moving and a potter's wheel were moving, would there be no time by which we might measure these turnings and say that they go on in equal intervals; or if it were moved sometimes more slowly and sometimes more quickly, that some intervals are longer and some shorter? Or, when we should say this, would we not be speaking in time, and would there be in our words some long syllables and others short, except that some sounded for a longer time and others for a shorter?

O God, vouchsafe unto men the ability to see, in a small

---

85 Cf. Ps. 115.1.
86 Ps. 26.4.
87 Ps. 38.6: the Old Latin version has *veteres* for the Vulgate *mensurabiles*.

thing, the common conceptions[88] of things both small and great. There are stars and shining bodies in the heavens, 'for signs and for seasons, and for days and years.'[89] There are, indeed. But, while I should not say that the revolution of that little wooden wheel is a day, on the other hand, that scholar of ours[90] would not say, then, that time does not exist.

(30) I desire to know the meaning and nature of time, by which we measure the movements of bodies and say, for example, that this movement is twice as long as that one. My question is: since a day is spoken of, not only as the period when the sun is above the earth, in the sense that day is distinguished from night, but also in terms of its complete circuit from the east back to the east—as when we say: 'so many days went by' (for, we speak of a certain number of days as including the nights, not as excluding the length of the nights)—and since a day is made up of the movement of the sun in a circuit from the east back to the east, my question is: whether this movement is itself the day, or is the duration in which it goes on, or both.

For, if the first [the movement of the sun] were the day, then it would be a day, even if the sun completed its course in just an hour. If the second [the duration], then it would not be a day if the duration from the rising of the sun to its next rising were so brief as to take but one hour—rather, the sun would have to go around twenty-four times to make a day. If both, then it could not be called a day either if the sun went through its complete circuit in the space of an hour or if, the sun having stopped its movement, just enough time were to go by for the sun to have completed its customary circuit from morning to morning.

---

88 *communes notitias*: the meaning seems to be, the universally knowable meanings or principles of things. Cf. Boethius' expression, *communes conceptiones* (*De Hebdomadibus* 1).

89 Gen. 1.14.

90 *ille*: referring to the learned man of the preceding paragraph.

So, I shall not ask what this thing is which is called a day, but what is time, by means of which we, measuring the course of the sun, might say that it took only half its customary time to go through it, if the amount of time it took were equivalent to the passage of twelve hours, and, comparing both, we should say that the one was to the other as one to two—even though sometimes the sun might complete its circuit from east to east in the single period and sometimes in the double of this period.

Therefore, let no one tell me that periods of time are equivalent to the movements of the heavenly bodies. For, when the sun stood still at the wish of a certain person, in order that he might complete a victorious battle,[91] the sun was standing still, but time was going on. Indeed, the fight was waged and finished in its own space of time which was enough for it.

I see, then, that time is some sort of extension. But, do I see it? Do I just seem to myself to see it? Thou wilt point it out, O Light, O Truth!

Chapter 24

(31) Dost Thou command me to assent, when someone says that time is the movement of a body?[92] Thou dost not. I hear that no body can be moved unless in time: Thou sayest it. But, I do not hear that the very motion of a body is time: Thou dost not say it. For, when a body is moved, in time, I can measure it as long as it is moved, from the instant

91 Jos. 10.12.

92 Augustine now proceeds to reject a theory of time which is not identifiable with any known predecessor (unless we conjecture that the Manichaeans may have held just such a simplistic view, for, little is known about their concept of time), but which is more akin to the Aristotelian doctrine than any other.

that it began to be moved until it ceases. And, if I did not see the point at which it began, and it continued to move so that I cannot see when it stops, I cannot measure it, except, perhaps, from the point when I begin to see it until I stop. And, if I see it for a long time, I can express the fact that it is a long time, but not exactly how long; for, when we say how much, we say it by means of a comparison—for instance: 'This is just as much as that,' or 'This is twice that,' or anything else in the same way. But, if we could note the places in space whence and whither the body comes as it is moving, or its parts if it is turning, as though on a lathe, we could say how great the time is in which the movement of a body or its part, from one place to another, is accomplished.

So, since the movement of a body is one thing, and that whereby we measure its duration is another, who could not judge which of these should preferably be called time? Indeed, if a body moves sometimes at different speeds, and sometimes stands still, we measure not only its movement, but also its condition of rest, by means of time. We say: 'It stood still, just as long as it moved,' or: 'it stood still twice or thrice as long as it moved,' and whatever else our act of measuring grasped accurately or, as the common saying is, roughly estimated.

Therefore, time is not the motion of a body.

Chapter 25

(32) And I confess to Thee, O Lord, that I still do not know what time is; again, I confess to Thee, O Lord, that I know that I am saying these things in time, and that I have spoken [93] at length now about time, and that this length can-

93 *loqui*: this and several other verbs in the present paragraph suggest that Augustine is dictating; most of his works may have been composed orally.

not be long without the extent of time. How, then, do I know this, when I do not know what time is? Perhaps I do not know how to say what I do know? Alas, I do not even know what I do not know! Behold, O my God, it is evident to Thee that I do not lie; I speak just as I feel in my heart. Thou wilt light up my lamp, O Lord my God, Thou wilt enlighten my darknesses.[94]

Chapter 26

(33) Surely, my soul is confessing truthfully to Thee that I do measure periods of time? Yes, O Lord my God, I do measure, but I do not know what I am measuring. I measure the movement of a body in time. But time itself, do I not measure it? Could I really measure the movement of a body, how long it is, and how long it takes to go from here to there, unless I also measure the time in which it is moved?

On what basis, then, do I measure time itself? Do we measure a longer time by means of a shorter time, as the length of a beam is measured by the length of a cubit?[95] Thus we see that the length of a long syllable is measured by the length of a short syllable, and say that it is twice the other. In this way, we measure the length of poems by the lengths of the verses, and the lengths of the verses by the lengths of the feet, and the lengths of the feet by the lengths of the syllables, and the lengths of the longs by the lengths of the shorts—not as written on tablets (for in that way we measure space, not time), but while the spoken words are going on. Thus, we say: 'this poem is long, for it is made up of so many verses; the verses are long, for they consist of so many feet; the feet are long, for they stretch over so many syllables; the syllable is long, for it is double a short one.'

94 Ps. 17.29.
95 The cubit is the length of the average man's forearm, about eighteen inches.

But, a definite measure of time is not grasped in that way, since it is possible for a short verse to sound over a greater length of time, if it be pronounced slowly, than a longer verse spoken hurriedly. The same is true of a poem, of a foot, of a syllable.

From this it appeared to me that time is nothing but extension,[96] but I do not know of what. It is amazing if it is not of the mind itself. I beseech Thee, O my God, what do I measure when I either say, indefinitely: 'this time is longer than that,' or, definitely: 'this is twice that'? I measure time, I know. But, I do not measure the future, because it does not exist yet; I do not measure the present, for it does not extend over any length; I do not measure the past, for it does not now exist. What, then, do I measure? Is it periods of time as they go by, but not in the past? So, in fact, have I said.

Chapter 27

(34) Keep on, O mind of mine, and firmly direct thy attention. 'God is our Helper';[97] 'He made us, and not we ourselves.'[98] Mark where truth brightens to the dawn.[99]

See, for instance, how a bodily voice begins to sound, and it sounds, and still sounds, and then stops; now there is silence: that voice is past, and voice there is no more. It was in the future before it sounded and could not be measured, for it was not yet existing—and now it cannot be, because it is already out of existence. The time, then, when it could be measured was when it was sounding, for then there existed

96 *distentionem*: the condition of being spread out; hence, extension, but not as limited to space. At this point, Augustine begins his own solution of the problem of time.

97 Ps. 61.9.

98 Ps. 99.3.

99 Cf. *Aeneid* 4.586.

something that could be measured. But, even then, it did not stand still; it went on and passed by. Was it, for this reason, more capable of measurement? For, while passing by, it extended itself into some space of time by which it could be measured, since the present possesses no extent.

And so, if it was capable of it then, consider another example of a second voice beginning to sound and still sounding in continuous duration without any interruption. Let us measure it while it is sounding, for, when it will have ceased its sounding, it will then be past and will not be anything that can be measured. Let us measure it then, and say how long it is. But, it is still sounding, and it cannot be measured, except from its start, when it began to sound, until its end, when it ceases. For, what we measure is the very interval from some starting point up to some ending. For this reason, the voice which has not yet ended cannot be measured, so that a statement may be made as to how long or short it is; nor can it be called equal to another, or single or double in relation to some unit, or anything else. But, when it will have ended, then it will not exist. How, then, can it be measured? Yet, we do measure periods of time, and not those which do not yet exist, or those which are no longer in existence, or those which extend over no duration, or those which have no endings. So, then, we do not measure future ones, or present, or past, or those which are going into the past, yet we do measure periods of time.

(35) 'O God, who hast created all,'[100]—this verse is of eight syllables, alternately short and long. Thus, the four short ones, first, third, fifth, seventh, are simple in relation to the four longs, the second, fourth, sixth, eighth. Each of these latter, in relation to each of the former, has twice as much time. This I proclaim and report, and it is so, in so far as

100 For fuller text of St. Ambrose's hymn, *'Deus creator omnium,'* cf. above, 9.12.32.

it is perceived by evident perception. To the extent that sense perception is evident, I measure a long syllable by a short one and I perceive that it is just twice as much. But, when one sounds after another, the first being short, the following one long, how can I hold on to the short one, and how can I apply it to the long as I am making the measurement, so as to find out that the latter is just twice—since the long one does not begin to sound unless the short one stops sounding? And, can I even measure the long one while it is present, since, unless it has ended, I cannot measure it? But, its ending is its passing out of existence.

What, then, is it that I measure? Where is the short one by which I do the measuring? Where is the long one which I measure? Both have sounded, flown away, passed by; they exist no longer. Yet, I do measure, and I answer with confidence, in so far as confidence can be placed in any exercise of sense perception,[101] that this one is single, that double—in the extent of time, that is. Nor can I do this, except because they have passed away and are ended. Therefore, I do not measure these syllables which no longer exist, but something in my memory which remains as a fixed impression.

(36) In thee, O mind of mine, do I measure periods of time. Do not interrupt me by clamoring: 'But it does exist';[102] do not interrupt thyself with the noisy disturbances of thy previous mental habits.[103] In thee, I say, do I measure periods of time. I measure the present mental disposition which things passing by produce in thee and which remains after they have

101 Note the Platonic distrust of the senses, implicit in this sentence.

102 Augustine does not wish to consider the possibility that there is an objective time; he is not necessarily rejecting it as untrue.

103 *affectionum*: in this passage, *affectio* (*Stoic*: *diáthesis*) does not merely mean 'impression,' but an ingrained, habitual disposition of mind. It carries an appetitive as well as a cognitive connotation. Cf. *In Joan Evang.* tract 46.8; *Contra Julian. Pelag.* 6.18.54.

passed away, not the things which have passed away in order to produce it. This I measure, when I measure periods of time. Therefore, either these [mental dispositions] are periods of time, or what I measure is not time.

But, how is it when we measure periods of silence and say that this silence took as much time as that spoken sound did —do we not direct the attention of our cogitation to the measure of the voice, as if it were sounding, so that we can report something about the intervals of silence in the whole space of time? For, even when the voice and lips of the speaker have stopped, we continue to go over, in the act of cogitation, poems, verses, any form of speech, and any means whatever of measuring out motions, and this is the way we report on temporal intervals, how one stands in relation to another, for it is as if we spoke and they were actually sounding. If a person wanted to utter a rather long spoken tone, and decided, by thinking it over in advance, how long it would be, he has obviously gone through this space of time in silence, and then, committing it to his memory, he begins to utter the note which sounds until it reaches the terminus that has been previously determined. Nay, rather, it has sounded and it will sound. For, that part of it which is already over certainly has sounded, but the part which remains will sound; and that is how it is completed, while present mental awareness [*intentio*] pushes the future over into the past by decreasing the future and increasing the past, until through the eating up of the future it all becomes past.[104]

---

104 Many similarities will be found between this theory of time and that of H. Bergson (*Durée et simultanéite* [Paris 1922] 54-62); the stress on memory, on the continuity in consciousness, on a subjective approach—these are found in both thinkers. For a longer discussion by Augustine of the use of the 'numbers' of inner consciousness as standards of judment for rhythm, see *De musica* 6.8.22.

Chapter 28

(37) But, how is the future, which does not yet exist, decreased or eaten up, or how does the past, which is no longer exsiting, increase, unless because of the fact that three functions occur in the mind which is doing this? It looks ahead, it attends, and it remembers—in such a way that what it looks forward to passes through what it is attending to into what it is remembering. Who denies that future things are not yet existing? Yet, there is now in the mind an expectation of future things. Who denies that past things are already non-existent? Yet, there is still in mind the memory of things past. Who denies that present time lacks extent, for it passes away in an instant, like a point? Yet, attention lasts on, and, through it, what will be continues to go on into that which is no longer here. So, the non-existent future is not a long time, but a long future period is a long expectation of the future; nor is past time long, for it is non-existent, but a long past is a long memory of that which is past.

(38) I am about to sing a song[105] that I know. Before I begin, my expectation is directed to the whole thing, but, when I have begun, in regard to that part which I have plucked off and committed to the past, my memory also directs its attention to it, and the life of this action of mine is spread out both in memory, by virtue of what I have sung, and in expectation, by virtue of what I am yet to sing. Yet, my attention remains in the present, for, through it, that which is to come is passed over so that it becomes past. And, the more this is done, on and on, the more is memory lengthened out by a shortening of the function of expectation—until the whole of expectation is used up, when the completely finished act has passed over into memory. What goes on for the whole song occurs also for each of its parts and

105 *canticum*: here, seems to mean any kind of song.

for each of its individual syllables; the same, again, for a longer action, of which this song is perhaps but a part; the same for the whole life of a man, the parts of which are all the actions of men; and the same for the whole era of the 'sons of men,'[106] the parts of which are all the lives of men.

Chapter 29

(39) But, since 'Thy mercy is better than lives,'[107] behold my life is but a distraction;[108] and Thy right hand has held me up,'[109] in my Lord the Son of man, the Mediator between Thee as One and us as many, in many ways and by many means, so that through Him I may lay hold of that for which He has laid hold of me, and that I may be gathered in from the days of old and follow the One.[110] Forgetting what is behind, not straining outward to things which will come and pass away, but straining forward to what is before, not according to distraction, but with mental concentration, I press on toward the prize of my heavenly calling,[111] where I shall hear the voice of praise[112] and I shall see Thy delight,[113] which neither comes nor passes away.

Now, indeed, 'my years [are spent] in sighs,'[114] and Thou my Consolation, O Lord, Thou art my Eternal Father. But,

106 Ps. 30.20.
107 Ps. 62.4.
108 *distentio*: previously translated as 'extension' (n. 96, above), it suggests, here, a thinning out of reality consequent upon extension; cf. *diástasis* in Plotinus, *Ennead.* 3.7.11.
109 Ps. 17.36; 62.9.
110 In *Serm.* 255.6, Augustine says: 'Before we arrive at the One, we need many things. Let the One extend us on, lest the many distend us and break us off from the One.' The notion of distraction of consciousness to the many is strongly Neo-Platonic.
111 Cf. Phil. 3.12-14.
112 Ps. 25.7.
113 Ps. 26.4.
114 Ps. 30.11.

I have disintegrated into periods of time, of whose order I am ignorant, and my thoughts, which are the innermost vital parts of my soul, are rent asunder by tumultuous diversities—until such time as I shall flow together into Thee, purged and melted into clear liquid form, by the fire of Thy love.

Chapter 30

(40) And I shall become firm and solidify in Thee, in the form[115] made for me in Thy Truth; nor shall I suffer the questions of men who, as a result of their penal sickness, are thirsty for more than they can take in. They say: 'What did God do, before He made heaven and earth?' or 'How did the thought occur to Him to make something, when He never made anything before?'

Grant to them, O Lord, the ability to think well on what they say and to discover that one should not say 'never' in reference to a situation where time does not exist. Thus, when a man says that one 'never' made anything, what else is said but that one made it at no time? May they see, then, that time cannot be at all without creation,[116] and may they stop talking this foolishness.[117] May they be inclined forward, also, to those things which are before, and understand that Thou art before[118] all periods of time, the Eternal Creator of all times,

115 This daring metaphor is reminiscent of Plotinus' attempts to describe union with the One; it is influential upon the vocabulary, at least. of latter Christian mysticism. For an approach to the view that God is the Supreme Form of all things, cf. B. J. Muller-Thym, *On the University of Being in Meister Eckhart* (New York 1939) 79-115.

116 Cf. *De civ. Dei* 11.6; see below, 12.29.40 *fin.*

117 Ps. 143.8.

118 Phil. 3.13.

and that no periods of time and no creature, even one which may be above time,[119] are co-eternal with Thee.

Chapter 31

(41) O Lord my God, what a chasm this is, in Thy deep secret, and how far away from it have the results of my shortcomings cast me? Heal my eyes and let me share in the joy of Thy light. Indeed, if there be a mind reinforced by such great knowledge and foreknowledge, to whom all past and future things are known in the way that one very familiar song is known to me, then this mind is exceeding wondrous and so amazing as to inspire fear. For, thus, nothing whatever that has gone on, and nothing that remains in future centuries, lies hidden to it; even as to me, singing this song, there is nothing hidden of what and how much of it has gone away from the beginning, of what and how much remains until the end.

But, away with the notion that Thou, Creator of the universe, Creator of souls and bodies—away with the notion that Thou shouldst know all future and past things in that way. Far, far more wonderful art Thou, and far more mysterious. For, it is not as the feelings are changed and the sense perceptions extended in the case of a singer of something well known, or of one who hears a familiar song in expectation of the coming words and in memory of the past ones—not in this way does something occur to the immutably

119 The angelic creature is what Augustine is considering as a possible exception. See *De civ. Dei* 12.16 (Ben. ed., n. 15) where he says that the angels are mutable and time began with them; but he discusses the possibility that they may exist above time.

Eternal, that is, to the truly Eternal Creator of minds. Therefore, just as Thou didst know 'heaven and earth in their Source,' without any change of Thy knowledge, so didst Thou make 'heaven and earth in their beginning'[120] without any difference in Thy action. Let him who understands confess to Thee, and let him who does not understand confess to Thee. Oh, how exalted Thou art, yet the humble in heart are Thy dwelling place![121] For Thou dost lift up those who are cast down,[122] and they, whose exaltation Thou art, do not fall.

120 Gen. 1.1.
121 Isa. 57.15.
122 Cf. Ps. 145.8.

BOOK TWELVE

Chapter 1

IN THIS POOR LIFE of mine, my heart, struck by the words of Thy Holy Scripture, is puzzling over many things, Lord. So, oftentimes, the poverty of human understanding is expressed in rich talk. For, inquiry talks more than discovery; petition is longer than the final concession; and busier is the hand that knocks than the hand that takes. We have the promise: who shall break it? 'If God is for us, who is against us?'[1] 'Ask and you shall receive:'[2] 'Seek and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives, and he who seeks, finds, and to him who knocks, it shall be opened.'[3] They are Thy promises, and who need fear falling into error, when Truth makes a promise?

1 Rom. 8.31.
2 John 16.24.
3 Matt. 7.7-9.

Chapter 2

(2) The lowliness of my tongue confesses to Thy highness, for Thou hast made heaven and earth[4]—this sky which I see and the earth which I tread, from which comes this earth[5] that I carry about. Thou wert the Maker.

But, where is the heaven of heaven,[6] O Lord, of which we hear in the words of the psalm: 'the heaven of heaven is the Lord's: but the earth He has given to the children of men'?[7] Where is the heaven which we do not see, in relation to which all that we do see is as earth? For, this corporeal world whose lower part is our earth has thus been beautifully formed, though not throughout its whole unto its lowest parts; but, in relation to the heaven of heaven, even the heaven of our earth is like an earth. And both these great bodies[8] are not unreasonably considered as earth, in relation to that ineffable heaven which belongs to the Lord, not to the sons of men.

Chapter 3

(3) Now, certainly, this 'earth was invisible and unorganized,'[9] some sort of deep abyss above which there was no light, because no visible appearance belonged to it. For this

4 For a brief analysis of the commentary on Gen. 1.1-2, which commences at this point, cf. Cayré, *Initiation* 178-180.

5 I.e., Augustine's human body; cf. above, 9.11.28.

6 *caelum caeli*: it was necessary for Augustine to distinguish between *caelum* (sky) and *Heaven* in the spiritual sense. To do this, he employed an Hebraicism, 'the heaven of heaven' (*caelum caeli*), to designate God's Heaven. (Cf. Dr. Pusey's useful note in the Everyman's Library edition of the *Confessions* 278 n. 1.) The Septuagint uses a similar Semiticism, e.g., Ps. 113.16: *ho ouranòs toû ouranoû.*

7 Ps. 113.16.

8 The two bodies are the earth and the corporeal heavens.

9 *invisibilis et inconposita*: this was the Old Latin version which Augustine had for Gen. 1.2; the Septuagint has: *aóratos kaì akataskeúastos.* The Douai English, 'void and empty,' is from the Vulgate, *'inanis et vacua.'*

reason Thou didst command it to be written, 'that darknesses were upon the deep':[10] what else is this than the absence of light? For, where would light be, if it existed, unless it were above, in the sense of dominating and enlightening? So, where the light did not yet exist, what else did it mean by darknesses being present than that light was absent? And so, darknesses were there above, because light was not there; just as where sound is not, there is silence. And what does it mean that silence is there, except that sound is not there?

Hast not Thou taught this soul which is confessing to Thee? Hast not Thou taught me[11] that, before Thou didst form and distinguish into different kinds this unformed matter, there was not any definite thing, neither color, nor shape, nor body, nor spirit? Yet, it is not that there was absolutely nothing: it was a certain formlessness without any species.[12]

Chapter 4

(4) Now, what should one call this [matter], so that some meaning may be conveyed even to those of slower perceptions, unless one use some familiar term? In fact, what can be found, in all the regions of the world, that is nearer to absolute formlessness than earth and abyss?[13] For, these are

10 Gen. 1.2.

11 Cf. Ps. 70.17.

12 Augustine does not mean that *materia informis* existed in time, before being formed. Rather, he explains elsewhere (*De Gen. ad litt.* 1.15.29) : 'Not that unformed matter is prior in time to formed things, for both are concreated at the one instant together, both that from which [*unde*] it was made, and that which [*quod*] was made.' (He proceeds to give the example of the component sounds of speech co-existing with the formed speech.) On the whole question of matter and form in Augustine's thought, cf. Gilson, *Introd. á l'étude de s. Augustin* (1943) 256-274.

13 *abyssus*: translated throughout as 'abyss' to avoid a circumlocution; it means the unfathomable depths of the sea.

less formed in beauty, because of their low level, than the higher things which are translucent and all-resplendent. Why, then, may I not take the formlessness of matter, which Thou hadst made without beauty of form,[14] and from which Thou mightest make the beautifully formed world, as being thus suitably expressed for men, when it is called 'the earth invisible and unorganized'?

Chapter 5

(5) Thus, when cogitation seeks to find what meaning may be attached to it, and says to itself: 'It is not an intelligible form, such as life or such as justice, for it is the material[15] of bodies; nor is it a sensible form, because what may be seen and perceived in sensation is not present in the invisible and unorganized'—while human cogitation says this to itself, it is trying either to know it by means of ignorance or to ignore it by means of knowledge.

Chapter 6

(6) Indeed, O Lord, if I may confess to Thee, with my mouth and pen, all that Thou hast taught me concerning matter in this sense, when formerly I heard its name and did not understand it—and those who told me about these things did not understand either—I was thinking of it, in cogitation, as having innumerable and diverse species, and so I was not really thinking about it. My mind used to roll up foul and

14 For those who read no Latin, it may be noted that Augustine's word for 'form' is *species,* which has the connotation of that which is agreeable to sight. Hence, that which is well-formed (*speciosum*) is beautiful.

15 *materies*: herein translated by the noun 'material'; whereas, *materia* is translated as 'matter.'

frightening forms into confused arrangements, but they were forms, nevertheless. So, I called formless not something that lacked form, but something that had form of such a kind that, were it to become perceptible, my power of perception would turn away, as from something unaccustomed and unsuitable, and my human frailty would have been thrown into confusion.

But, in truth, what I used to consider in cogitation was formless, not through the privation of all form, but by comparison with more beautifully formed things. Then, true reasoning suggested that I should remove altogether the last vestiges of any form whatsoever, if I desired to cogitate the genuinely formless. This I could not do. For, I should more easily have agreed that it did not exist at all, a thing deprived of every form, than think of something in between form and nothing, something neither formed nor nothing, an unformed thing which is almost nothing.

My mind stopped questioning my imaginative spirit[16] thereafter, for it was full of images of formed bodies, and it changed and varied these as it wished. And I directed my attention to bodies themselves, working more deeply into their mutability; by means of it, they cease to be what they were and start to be what they were not. I suspected that this transition from form to form was accomplished by means of some unformed thing and not by means of complete nothingness.[17]

But I wanted to know, not merely to suspect; and, if my voice and writing were to confess to Thee all that Thou hast

16 *spiritus*: the level of human consciousness at which man thinks in terms of images of sensible things; cf. *De Gen. ad litt.* 12.12.25;12.23.49; *De Trin.* 11.9.16.

17 Here, Augustine is approaching not only the concept of, but also the method of reasoning to, Aristotle's prime matter (*Phys.* 1.6-7: 189a11-191a20; *Metaph.* 8.1: 1042a33-b7). However Augustine never really knew the full Aristotelian theory; what he did know was probably learned through Plotinus (e.g., *Ennead.* 2.4.1-2).

opened up for me concerning this question, who among my readers would stay with it long enough to grasp it? Yet, my heart shall not cease, despite this, to give honor to Thee and to sing Thy praises concerning these things which it is not adequate to put into words.[18]

The mutability, then, of mutable things is itself capable of receiving all the forms into which mutable things are changed. And what is this? Is it mind? Is it body? Is it a species of mind or of body? If one could say: 'nothing—thing' and 'is —is not,' I should say it is thus; yet, it would have to have some kind of being, in order to be able to receive these visible and organized forms.

Chapter 7

(7) Whatever it is, where did it come from but from Thee, from whom all things are, in so far as they are? But, the more distant a thing is from Thee, the more it is unlike Thee; nor does this have reference to place.

Thus it was Thou, O Lord, who art not different at different times, but the Selfsame,[19] the Selfsame, the Selfsame—'Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God Almighty,'[20] who in the beginning which is from Thee, in Thy wisdom born of Thy Substance, didst make something and from nothing.

For, Thou didst not make heaven and earth out of Thyself; otherwise, it would have been equal to Thy Only-begotten Son, and in this way to Thee. It would not be at all right for a thing to be equal to Thee which was not out of Thyself. And, apart from Thee, there was nothing else from

18 *dictare*: again the suggestion that Augustine is speaking orally, not writing by hand.
19 Cf. Ps. 4.9, and above, 9.4.11.
20 Apoc. 4.8; Isa. 6.3

which Thou mightest make them, O God, One Trinity and Threefold Unity. Therefore, Thou hast made heaven and earth out of nothing—something great, yet something small. For, Thou art almighty and good to make all good things, the great heaven and the small earth. Thou wert, and there was nothing else from which Thou didst make heaven and earth—these two, one near to Thee, the other near to nothing; one, in regard to which Thou wert the only higher being; the other, in regard to which nothing was lower.

Chapter 8

(8) But, this 'heaven of heaven is Thine, O Lord';[21] while the earth, which Thou didst give to the 'sons of men' to be seen and touched, was not then like the one that we now see and touch. For, it was invisible and unorganized; it was an abyss, above which there was no light; or, perhaps, 'the darknesses were *above* the abyss'[22] means *greater* than in the abyss. For, indeed, this abyss of waters which are now visible has, even in its depths and appropriate to its specific nature, some kind of sensible light for the fish and crawling animals at its bottom. But, this whole was almost nothing, since it was still completely formless; yet, it was already something that could be formed.

Indeed, Thou, O Lord, didst make the world from formless matter, and this Thou didst make almost nothing and out of no thing, that Thou mightest make great things from it, at which we, the sons of men, wonder. For, this bodily heaven is quite wonderful, this firmament between water and water which Thou didst establish by saying, on the second day after the creation of light: 'Let it be made, and so was it

21 Cf. Ps. 113.16.
22 Gen. 1.2: here, Augustine offers an alternative interpretation.

made.'[23] Now, Thou hast called this firmament heaven, but the heaven of this earth and sea, which things Thou didst make, on the third day, by giving a visible form to formless matter, which Thou didst make before any day. For, Thou hadst already made another heaven before any day, but it was the heaven of this heaven, for in the beginning Thou hadst made heaven and earth.

Now, this earth which Thou hadst made was formless material, because it was invisible and unorganized, and the darknesses were above the abyss. From this invisible and unorganized earth, from this formlessness, from this almost-nothing, Thou wert to make all things by which this mutable world subsists—yet it does not really subsist[24]—in which that mutability is evident that enables periods of time to be perceived and distinguished by measurement. For, periods of time come into being by means of the changes of things, as the forms, whose material is the aforementioned invisible earth, are diversified and altered.

Chapter 9

(9) Therefore, the Spirit, the Teacher of Thy servant,[25] is silent concerning periods of time, and says nothing about days when He mentions that Thou didst make heaven and earth in the beginning. Of course, the heaven of heaven which Thou madest in the beginning is some intellectual creature,[26]

---

23 Cf. Gen. 1.6.

24 *constat et non constat*: the created world stands in existence, as something constituted out of the products of the creative act, but it does not really stand in existence by itself; God must support it at every instant.

25 *famuli tui*: Moses is so named several times in Book 12.

26 By 'intellectual creature' (*creatura intellectualis*), Augustine means the angelic nature; cf. *De Gen. ad litt.* 2.13.17.

which, though in no way co-eternal with Thee, the Trinity, is nonetheless a participant in Thy eternity. By virtue of the sweetness of the most happy contemplation[27] of Thee, it restrains its own mutability; and, without falling once since first it was made, it transcends every variable vicissitude of time by adhering closely to Thee.

Nor, in fact, is this formlessness—the invisible and unorganized earth—itself numbered by means of days. For, where there is no form, no order, nothing whatever comes or passes away; and, where this does not happen, there are certainly no days, no alteration of temporal durations.

Chapter 10

(10) O Truth, Light of my heart, let not my darknesses speak to me! I slipped down to these things and was darkened, but from there, even from that depth, I fell in love with Thee. I have gone astray, yet I have not forgotten Thee.[28] I heard Thy voice behind my back,[29] telling me to return, yet I scarcely heard because of the tumult of the enemies of peace.[30] But see, I am now returning as one perspiring and gasping for Thy fountain. Let no one hinder me; from it I shall imbibe and from it I shall revive. May I not be my own life: of myself, I have lived badly; unto myself I was death; in Thee I come back to life. Do Thou converse with me, discourse with me. I have believed Thy Books and their words are exceedingly mysterious.

---

27 The reference is to the Beatific Vision.
28 Cf. Ps. 118.176; Jonas 2.8.
29 Cf. Isa. 30.21.
30 The Manichaeans.

Chapter 11

(11) Already hast Thou told me, O Lord, by means of a loud voice in my interior ear, that Thou art eternal, alone possessing immortality,[31] since Thou dost change in relation neither to any form nor to motion, and Thy will is not altered in regard to periods of time, because no will is immortal if it is now one way and now another. In Thy sight, this is clear to me: may it become more and more clear, I pray Thee, and may I continue to live soberly under Thy protecting wings, within the influence of this revelation.

Thou hast also told me, O Lord, by means of a loud voice in my interior ear, that Thou hast made all natures and substances which are not what Thou art, and which nevertheless exist; that the only thing which is not from Thee is what does not exist, or the movement of a will away from Thee, who dost exist, toward that which is of a lower order of existence—for such a movement is a fault and a sin; and, finally, that no man's sin either harms Thee, or disturbs the order of Thy command, either in the first thing or in the last. In Thy sight, this is clear to me: may it become more and more clear, I pray Thee, and may I continue to live soberly under Thy protecting wings, within the influence of this revelation.

(12) Thou hast also told me, by means of a loud voice in my interior ear, that this creature—whose delight Thou alone art, which draws nourishment from Thee with most persevering chastity, and in no place and at no time betrays its mutability, keeping Thee always in its presence and cleaving to Thee with complete affection, having nothing in the future to look to, nor casting back into the past for anything to remember, being changed in no way nor spread

31 Cf. 1 Tim. 6.16.

out through any period of time—Thou hast told me that not even this creature is co-eternal with Thee.

O blessed creature, if there be any such, by virtue of cleaving to Thy beatitute, blessed in having Thee as its sempiternal Indweller and Illuminator! I can find none that I should more gladly deem worthy to be called the 'heaven of heaven which is the Lord's'[32] than Thy dwelling place—which contemplates Thy delight[33] without ever falling away in order to go out to another being, a pure mind unified by the most harmonious foundation of peace with the spirits of the saints, the citizens of Thy City[34] in the heavenly places which are superior to these ordinary heavens.

(13) From this, let any soul understand, any soul whose pilgrimage has become long, if but now it thirsts for Thee, if but now its tears have become its bread, while daily they say to it: 'Where is Thy God?'[35] if now it asks but one thing of Thee, and this it seeks after, that it may dwell in Thy house throughout all the days of its life (And what is its life but Thee? And what are Thy days but Thy eternity, even as Thy years which shall not fail because Thou art the Selfsame?[36])—from this, I say, let any soul, that can, understand how far above all temporal things Thou art as an Eternal Being, since Thy dwelling place—which has been on no pilgrimage—though not co-eternal with Thee, is nonetheless continually and unfailingly subject to no vicissitude of time, by virtue of its attachment to Thee.

In Thy sight, this is clear to me: may it become more and more clear, I pray Thee, and may I continue to live soberly

32 Ps. 113.16.
33 Cf. Ps. 24.4.
34 The members of the City of God are united in their love of God. The theme is, of course, developed throughout Augustine's great treatise, *De civitate Dei;* for an analysis and special bibliography on this work, cf. Bourke, *Augustine's Quest of Wisdom* 248-284.
35 Cf. Ps. 41.3-4,11.
36 Cf. Ps. 101.28.

under Thy protecting wings, within the influence of this revelation.

(14) Now, there is some sort of formless thing[37] in these changes pertaining to the last and lowest things. Yet, who will tell me, except some person who, through the vanity of his heart, is wandering about and rolling around in his own phantasms; who, except such a person, will tell me, when every form has been wasted away and used up, leaving only formlessness by which a thing used to change and alter from one species to another, that this formlessness could show changes of time? For, it is altogether impossible, because there are no periods of time without diversity of movements, and, where there is no species, there is no diversity.

Chapter 12

(15) Having considered these things, in so far as Thou dost grant it, O my God, in so far as Thou dost incite me to knock[38] and in so far as Thou dost open when I knock, I find two things which Thou hast made to be without periods of time, though neither is co-eternal with Thee: one is so well formed that, without any failure in the act of contemplation, without any period of change, though mutable, it nonetheless is not changed, but enjoys eternity and immutability; the second was so formless that it was incapable of changing from one form to another, either of motion or of rest, by which it would be subject to time. But, Thou didst not leave this latter thing to its formlessness, for Thou madest,

37 The Biblical source of Augustine's theory of 'formless matter' is Wisd. 11.18: 'For thy almighty hand, which made the world of matter without form. . . .' Cf. J. Martin, *Saint Augustin* (2me éd. Paris 1923) 253-267, and A. C. Pegis, 'The Mind of St. Augustine,' *Mediaeval Studies* 6 (1944) 32-37.

38 Cf. above, 12.1.1.

before any day, as the heaven and earth in the beginning, these two things of which I have spoken.

But, the earth was invisible and unorganized, and darknesses were above the abyss.[39] Formlessness is suggested by these words, so that people might grasp the meaning by degrees, for they are unable to think in cogitation about an absolute privation of form that still does not go as far as nothing. From this, another visible and organized heaven and earth were to be made, the beautifully formed water and whatever is mentioned as having been made successively in the creation of this world, but not apart from days. For, these things are such that the vicissitudes of time go on, in them, because of the orderly interchanges of movements and forms.

Chapter 13

(16) For the time being, this is the meaning I perceive, O my God, when I hear Thy Scripture saying: 'In the beginning God made heaven and earth: but the earth was invisible and unorganized, and darknesses were above the abyss,' without noting on what day Thou didst make them. Thus, for the time being, I understand that 'heaven of heaven' as the intellectual heaven (where the understanding is able to know all at once, not in part, not in an obscure manner, not through a mirror, but wholly, in a revelation, face to face;[40] not this thing now, and another thing later, but, as has been said, to know all at once without any vicissitude of times) And, by the invisible and unorganized earth I understand that it is without any vicissitude of times (for this customarily implies having one thing now and another later), but, where

39 Gen. 1.1. This text is repeated many times in what follows.
40 1 Cor. 13.12.

there is no species, there is never any distinction of this and that.

It is with reference to these two—the one well formed originally, and the other wholly formless; the former being heaven, but the 'heaven of heaven,' the latter earth, but the invisible and unorganized earth—it is with reference to these two that I for the time being understand the Scripture to say, without mentioning days: 'In the beginning, God made heaven and earth.' Indeed, it adds immediately what 'earth' it was talking about. And, since mention is made of the fact that the firmament was made and called heaven on the second day, it suggests what heaven was spoken about first, without days.

Chapter 14

(17) Wonderful is the depth of Thy words; see, how their surface meaning lies before us, attracting us as if we were children: but the depth is wonderful, O my God, the depth is wonderful! It is a fearful thing to look into it, a fear inspired by respect and a trembling due to love. I detest its enemies violently: Oh, if Thou wouldst kill them with Thy two-edged sword,[41] and they would not be its enemies! Thus, I should like them to be killed to themselves, in order that they might live for Thee.

But, consider certain other men who are not critics, but admirers of the Book of Genesis; they say: 'the Spirit of God, who wrote these things by means of His servant, Moses, did not wish this understanding to be had of these words; He did not wish understood the meaning that you state, but another, which we do.' With Thee as Judge, O Lord of us all, I answer them in this way.

41 Ps. 149.6; *Enarr. in ps.* 149.12, identifies the two edges of God's sword with the Old and New Testaments.

Chapter 15

(18) Will you men say that those things are false which the Truth tells me, with a loud voice in my interior ear, concerning the true eternity of the Creator, namely, that His substance is changed in no way through periods of time and that His will is not something outside His substance? Hence, that He does not will one thing at one moment and another thing later, but, once and for all, all together, and forever, He wills everything that He wills—not again and again, not these things now and those things at another time, nor does He will later what He formerly did not will, nor does He unwill what He formerly willed, because such a will is mutable and every mutable thing is non-eternal; but 'Our God is Eternal.'[42]

Again, it[43] tells me in my interior ear that the expectation of things to come becomes an immediate vision, once these things have come, and the same vision becomes memory, once they pass away; further, every mental act which changes in this way is mutable, and every mutable thing is non-eternal: but 'Our God is Eternal.' All these things I gather together and combine, and I find that my God, the eternal God, did not establish creation by any new act of will, nor did His knowledge undergo any transition.

(19) What will you say, then, you contradicters? Are these things false? 'No,' they say.[44] What, then? Is it false that every formed nature, and matter capable of being formed, does not exist except from Him who is the highest Good because He exists in the highest way? 'Nor do we deny this,' they say. What, then? Do you deny this, that there is a

42 Ps. 47.15.
43 'It' is God's Truth, dwelling in his soul.
44 A brief example of Augustine's method of writing in imaginary dialogue. He often used this style of polemic, notably in the long *Contra Faustum Manich.*

certain sublime creature which cleaves to the true and truly eternal God with such chaste love that, although not co-eternal with Him, it still does not loosen itself from Him and flow off into any temporal diversity and vicissitude, but reposes in the truest contemplation of Him alone? For Thou, O God, when this creature loves Thee as much as Thou dost command, Thou dost show Thyself to it and art sufficient for it, and therefore it does not turn away from Thee nor to itself.[45] Such is the house of God, not earthly or corporeal as formed from any celestial substance with mass, but spiritual and a participant in Thy eternity, because without stain forever. For, Thou hast 'established it for ever, and for ages of ages; Thou hast made a decree and it shall not pass away.'[46] Yet, it is not co-eternal with Thee, because it is not without a beginning; for, it has been made.

(20) Though we do not find time before it (for 'wisdom has been created before all things'[47]), it is certainly not that wisdom which is absolutely co-eternal and equal with Thee, O God of ours, Its own Father, that wisdom through which all things have been created, the principle in which Thou hast made heaven and earth. It is a wisdom which has been created, that is to say, an intellectual nature which is light by virtue of a contemplation of Light; for, it also is called wisdom, even though created. But, there is a great difference between the light which is a source of illumination and that which receives it, and there is an equally great difference between the wisdom which creates and that which is created. There is a similar difference between the justice that justifies and the justice that is produced by justification. (For, we have also been called Thy justice. Indeed, one of Thy servants has said: 'so that in Him we might become the justice of

45 *ad se*: this is the reading in Skutella and the other editions, with the exception of Knöll who reads *a se*, following the Sessorianus Ms.
46 Ps. 148.6.
47 Eccli. 1.4.

God.'[48]) So, then, there is created before all things a certain wisdom, a created wisdom, the rational and intellectual mind of Thy chaste City, 'which is above, is free, which is our mother,'[49] and it is 'eternal in the heavens'[50] (in what heavens but those heavens of heavens'[51] which praise Thee, for this is the heaven of heaven of the Lord?). Now, although we find no time before it, for it was created before all things and preceded the creation of time, there is before it the eternity of the Creator Himself, from whom, when made, it took its origin—though not in time, for there was as yet no time, but in the fact of its own creation.

(21) Hence, in this way is it from Thee, our God, that it is completely a different being and not the Selfsame—even though we find time, not only not before it, but not even in it, because it is capable of seeing Thy face always and is never turned away from it; and so it comes about that it is altered by no sort of change. Yet, mutability itself is present in it, whence it could grow dark and cold, unless it adhere to Thee with a great love and be enlightened and warmed from Thee, as if in a perpetual mid-day.

O luminous and beautifully formed dwelling place, I have loved thy beauty and the dwelling place of the glory of my Lord,[52] thy Maker and Possessor! For thee may my pilgrimage sigh, and I ask Him who made thee to possess me also in thee, for He has made me, also. 'I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost,'[53] but I hope to be carried back to thee on the shoulders of my Shepherd,[54] thy Builder.

(22) What do you say to me, you contradicters to whom I was talking, you who believe, nevertheless, that Moses is a

48 St. Paul is the 'servant' who has said it: 2 Cor. 5.21.
49 Gal. 4.26.
50 2 Cor. 5.1.
51 Ps. 148.4.
52 Cf. Ps. 25.8.
53 Ps. 118.176.
54 Luke 15.5.

faithful servant of God and that his books are the oracles of the Holy Spirit? Is not this dwelling place of God, not, of course, co-eternal with God, but yet, in its own mode, eternal in the heavens, a place where you seek in vain for changes of times, for you will not find them? This dwelling, whose good it is ever to adhere to God,[55] transcends all extent and all the changeable duration of age.

'It is so,' they say.

What part, then, of these things that my heart has cried out to my God,[56] when it inwardly heard the voice of His praise,[57] what, finally, do you maintain to be false? Is it the claim that there was a formless material, in which there was no order because of the absence of form? But, where there was no order, there could have been no vicissitude of temporal periods. Yet, this almost-nothing, in so far as it was not completely nothing, was, of course, from Him from whom comes everything that is something, in whatever way it be so.

'This, also, we do not deny,' they reply.

Chapter 16

(23) Now, I want to have a little talk, in Thy presence, O my God, with these people who concede that all these things are true, upon which Thy truth is not silent within my mind. As for those who deny them, let them bark as much as they wish and disturb themselves with their own noise; I shall strive to persuade them to become quiet and to hold the way open to themselves for Thy word. Now, if they refuse and repulse me, I beseech Thee, O my God, 'be Thou not silent to me.'[58]

55 Cf. Ps. 72.28.
56 Ps. 17.7.
57 Ps. 25.7.
58 Ps. 27.1.

Do Thou speak truthfully within my heart, for only Thou speakest in that way. I shall leave those people outside, blowing on the dust and stirring up the earth into their own eyes, and I shall go into my own little room[59] and sing love songs to Thee, groaning unutterable groanings[60] during my pilgrimage, recalling in my heart the Jerusalem[61] to which my heart has been uplifted, Jerusalem my homeland, Jerusalem my mother, and Thee ruling over it, enlightening, its Father, Protector, Spouse, its chaste and strong delight, and the undivided joy and all its indescribable goods—all at once together, for it is the one highest and true Good! Nor shall I be turned aside, until, into its peace, that of this dearest mother, where the first fruits of my spirit are, from which these certitudes come to me, Thou dost gather in my whole being from this dispersion and deformity, and conform and confirm me for the eternal, O my God, my Mercy!

But, with those men who do not say that all these things, which are true, are false—those who are respectful and who agree with us in putting that holy Scripture of Thine, which was promulgated by the saintly Moses, in the highest position of authority that is ours to follow, and yet who disagree with us on some point—I speak as follows. Be Thou, our God, the Judge between my confessions and their contradictions.

---

59 The 'little room' (*cubile*) is used by Augustine to signify his heart, the inner seat of his affections; cf. *De sermone Domini in monte* 2.3.11, with ref. to Matt. 6.6.

60 Cf. Rom. 8.26.

61 Jerusalem symbolizes peace, and, in the spiritual sense, Heaven. The phrase which follows (*in eam sursum corde*) may be an echo of the *Sursum corde* which occurs in the Preface of the Mass, as Skutella suggests (*Conf.* p. 308.22 note) , See also below, 13.7.8 and *Enarr. in ps.* 31.2.21; 132.13. For further references in Augustine's *Sermons,* see *Miscellanea Agostiniana* I, Index, s.v. *Sursum cor.*

Chapter 17

(24) For, they say: 'Though these are true, Moses did not have these two points before his mind when he said, under the revelation of the Spirit: "In the beginning, God made heaven and earth."[62] By the name "heaven" he did not mean the spiritual or intellectual creature which is everlastingly contemplating the face of God, nor by the name "earth" did he mean formless matter.'

What, then?

'This man meant,' they reply, 'what we say, and this is what he spoke in these words.'

Well, what is it?

'By the words "heaven and earth," ' they say, 'he wished to signify, first, this whole world, completely and in brief, so that he could later indicate, by an enumeration of the days,[63] the whole thing piece by piece as it were, which the Holy Spirit was pleased to communicate in this way. In fact, such were the uneducated and material-minded people he was addressing that he judged that only the visible works of God were to be mentioned to them.'

They agree, however, that the invisible and unorganized earth, and the darkened abyss, from which all these visible things, known to everyone, have been made and arranged in their places during those days—as the sequel indicates—are to be understood as that formless matter of which I spoke.

(25) What of this? Suppose another man says that this formlessness, this confusedness, of matter was first suggested by the words 'heaven and earth,' because this visible world with all the things having different natures, which are very plainly apparent in it—what is customarily and frequently

62 Gen. 1.1.
63 The six days of Creation.

called heaven and earth—has been established and prefected from it?

And what if still another man says that it is quite fitting for the invisible and the visible nature to be called heaven and earth, and, thus, for the whole created universe, which God made in wisdom, that is, in the principle, to be understood under two terms of this kind? But, in fact, since all things have been made, not from the very Substance of God, but from nothing, for they are not the Selfsame as God, and since there is a certain mutability present in all things (whether they remain constant, as in the case of the eternal dwelling place of God, or change, as in the case of the soul and body of man)—a common material of things invisible and visible, formless as yet, but of course capable of being formed, that out of which heaven and earth were to be made (that is, the invisible and the visible, but both now considered as formed creatures), was this the meaning of those words, 'the invisible and unorganized earth and the darknesses over the abyss,' yet with this distinction: that the 'invisible and unorganized earth' be understood as corporeal material before possessing the characteristic of form, while 'the darknesses over the abyss' would be understood as spiritual material before the restriction of its flowing limitlessness and before being illumined from Wisdom?

(26) There might even be another who says, if he desires, that it is not perfected and fully formed invisible and visible natures that are meant by the words, 'heaven and earth,' as they are used in the text: 'In the beginning, God made heaven and earth,' but this still formless commencement of things, a matter capable of being formed and created, is named by these words, because those things were already present in it, confused and not yet distinguished by qualities and forms, which, now arranged in their proper orders, are called heaven and earth, the one a spiritual creation, the other a corporeal creation.

Chapter 18

(27) Now, having heard and considered all of these, I do not wish to quarrel over words; 'for that is useless, leading only to the ruin of the listeners.'[64] But, the Law is good for edification, if a man uses it rightly, because its purpose is charity, from a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned.[65] Our Teacher knows on what two precepts He hung the whole Law and the Prophets.[66] Now, if I ardently profess these, O my God, 'Light of my eyes'[67] in secret, what harm does it do me, if different meanings can be understood in these words, meanings which yet are true? What harm, I say, does it do me, if I hold about the writer's intention an interpretation different from another's? Of course, all of us who read try to find out and understand what he whom we are reading intended, and, when we believe him to be veracious, we would not dare to think that he has said what we either know or think false. Therefore, while every person strives to perceive the meaning in the holy Scriptures which the writer put there, how is it wrong if one perceives the meaning which Thou, O Light of all truthful minds, dost show to be true—even though the author whom he reads does not grasp the same meaning, yet is perceiving a true meaning, but not this one?[68]

---

64 2 Tim. 2.14.

65 Cf. 1. Tim. 4 and 8; possibly *ad aedificationem,* in this text, should be understood to mean: 'for building up' of a structure of all the virtues on a foundation of charity.

66 Cf. Matt. 22.40.

67 Ps. 37.11.

68 A famous statement of Augustine's opinion that a Scriptural text may have several true meanings. This does not necessarily suggest that there are plural, literal meanings, all equally true. In fact, Augustine says that the Holy Spirit knows the one, best meaning (below, 12.32.43). Cf., also, *De doct. Christ.* 3.27.38 (translated by J. J. Gavigan, in this series), and *De gen. ad lit.* 1.1. That Augustine taught an actual plurality of literal meanings is denied by F. Talon, 'S. Augustin a-t-il réellement enseigné la pluralité des sens littéraux dans l'Ecriture?' *Rech. de science relig.* 11 (1921) 1-28.

Chapter 19

(28) Indeed, it is true,[69] O Lord, that Thou didst make heaven and earth. And it is true that the 'principle' is Thy Wisdom, in which Thou didst make all things. It is also true that this visible world has as its chief parts, heaven and earth, by way of a brief summary of all things made and natures created. And it is true that every mutable thing implies, to our knowledge, a certain formlessness, by which it is receptive to form or by which it is changed and altered. It is true that a being which adheres so closely to an immutable form that, though mutable, it is not changed, does not experience vicissitudes of time. It is true that formlessness, which is almost nothing, can have no alterations in periods of time. It is true that that from which something is made can, in one way of speaking, possess already the name of the thing which is made from it; hence, that indefinite formlessness could have been called heaven and earth, since heaven and earth were made from it. It is true that, of all formed things, nothing is closer to the formless than earth and the abyss. It is true that Thou, from whom all things are,[70] hast made not only what is created and formed, but also whatever can be created and formed. It is true that everything which is formed from the formless must first be formless and, then, a formed thing.

Chapter 20

(29) From all these truths, which those whose interior eye Thou hast permitted to see such things do not doubt, and

---

69 This chapter constitutes a summary of much of the interpretation in the previous eighteen chapters.
70 1 Cor. 8.6.

who believe unshakably that Moses, Thy servant, spoke in the Spirit of truth[71]—from all these truths, then, one man picks out one for himself and says: 'In the beginning, God made heaven and earth,' that is, in His Word, co-eternal with Himself, God has made intelligible and sensible, or spiritual and corporeal, creation. Another man says: 'In the beginning, God made heaven and earth,' that is, in His Word, co-eternal with Himself, God made this whole mass of the bodily world, together with all the observable and known natures which it contains. Another man says: 'In the beginning, God made heaven and earth,' that is, in His Word, co-eternal with Himself, God made formless matter for spiritual and corporeal creation. Another man says: 'In the beginning, God made heaven and earth,' that is, in His Word, co-eternal with Himself, God made formless matter for corporeal creation, in which heaven and earth were then present confusedly, and we now perceive them as separated and formed in the bulk of this world. Still another man says: 'In the beginning, God made heaven and earth,' that is, in the very commencement of His action of making and working, God made formless matter, confusedly possessing heaven and earth, and from it they now stand forth and appear as formed things, together with all the things which are in them.

Chapter 21

(30) Again, the same situation pertains to the understanding of the words which follow.[72] Out of all these true interpretations, one man picks out one and says: 'but the earth was invisible and unorganized, and darknesses were above the abyss,' that is, that corporeal thing which God made was as

71 Cf. John 14.17.
72 I.e., in Gen. 1.2.

yet the formless material of corporeal things, without order, without light. Another man says: 'but the earth was invisible and unorganized, and darknesses were above the abyss,' that is, this whole thing which is called heaven and earth was then formless and darkened material, from which the corporeal heaven and the corporeal earth were to be made, along with all the things in them which are known to our bodily senses. Another man says: 'but the earth was invisible and unorganized, and darknesses were above the abyss,' that is, this whole which is called heaven and earth was then formless and darkened material, from which the intelligible heaven was to be made—the one which is elsewhere called the 'heaven of heaven'[73]—and also the earth, that is, all corporeal nature, under which term may even be understood this corporeal heaven, in a word, that from which every invisible and visible creature was to be made. Another man says: 'but the earth was invisible and unorganized, and darknesses were above the abyss'; Scripture does not call that formlessness by the name of heaven and earth, but that formlessness, he says, already existed, and he named it the invisible and unorganized earth and the darkened abyss, from which he had already said that God made heaven and earth, namely, spiritual and corporeal creation. Still another man says: 'but the earth was invisible and unorganized, and darknesses were above the abyss,' that is, formlessness was already existing as a certain material, out of which the Scripture said before that God made heaven and earth, namely, the whole corporeal mass of the world, divided into two chief parts, the higher and the lower, along with all the customary and known creatures that are in them.

73 Ps. 113.16.

Chapter 22

(31) Now, someone might try to criticize these last two views in this way: 'If you do not agree that this formlessness of matter seems to be called heaven and earth, then there must have been something which God did not make, that out of which He made heaven and earth. Scripture does not tell anything about God making this material, unless we understand that it is meant by the expression, "heaven and earth," or just "earth," in the statement, "In the beginning, God made heaven and earth." As for the text which follows, "but the earth was invisible and unorganized," though it pleased him to name formless matter in that way, we can only understand that which God made in that first text as written above: "He made heaven and earth." ' Those who maintain those two meanings which we have put last, whether the one or the other, will reply, when they hear these words, by saying: 'Indeed we do not deny that this formless matter was made by God, by the God from whom came "all things and they were very good,"[74] because, just as we say that the greater good is that which is created and formed, so, too, do we admit that a lesser good, but still a good, is what is made capable of being created and of being formed. But, the Scripture did not mention that God made this formlessness, just as it is silent about many other things—such as Cherubim and Seraphim, and the others which the Apostle plainly speaks of, "Thrones, Dominations, Principalities, Powers,"[75] although it is evident that God did make all these. Or, if in that text which states: "He made heaven and earth," all things are comprehended, then what do we say about the waters over which the "Spirit of God moved"?[76] For, if they are

74 Cf. Gen. 1.31.
75 Col. 1.16.
76 Gen. 1.2.

included under the name of earth, how is formless material now taken under the name of earth, since we see the waters so beautifully formed? Or, if it be so taken, why is it written that the firmament was made out of the same formlessness and called heaven, yet it is not written that the waters were made? For, they are not still formless and unseen, these waters which we see flowing in such an attractive specific appearance. Or, if they received this specific appearance at the time when God said: "Let the water which is under the firmament be gathered together,"[77] in the sense that the gathering together is the formation, then what answer will be given concerning the waters which are above the firmament; for, if formless, they would never have deserved so honorable a position and nothing has been written about the word by which they were formed?'

'Hence, if Genesis is silent about God's making of something, when, however, that God did make it, neither sound faith nor sure understanding is in any doubt, neither, then, will any serious teaching dare to claim that these waters are co-eternal with God, just because we do hear them mentioned in the Book of Genesis, but do not find when they were made—why can we not understand, when truth teaches it, that this formless matter also, which Scripture calls this "invisible and unorganized earth and the darkened abyss," was made by God from nothing, and so is not co-eternal with Him, even though this account failed to report on when it was made?'

Chapter 23

(32) So, having heard these interpretations and looked into them to the limit of my frailty (which I confess to my God who knows it), I see that two kinds of disagreements

77 Gen. 1.9.

could arise when something is expressed through signs[78] by truthful interpreters: one sort of disagreement arises if there is a question concerning the truth of things; the other, if there is question concerning the intention of the speaker. For, it is one thing for us to inquire just what is true about the establishment of creation; it is quite another thing to ask just what Moses, that outstanding servant[79] of Thy faith, desired the reader and hearer to understand in these words.

In relation to the first kind of disagreement, let all those be far from me who think that they know things that in fact are false. Again, in regard to the second, let all be far from me who think that Moses said false things. But, as for those who are fed upon Thy truth in the breadth of charity, let me be joined together with them in Thee, O Lord, and may I be made joyful with them in Thee. Let us approach together the words of Thy Books and let us seek out in them Thy intention, through the intention of Thy servant, by whose pen Thou didst dispense it.

Chapter 24

(33) Yet, who among us discovers it[80] so well, among so many truths which in one way and another occur to the understandings of those who inquire into these words, that he may say with as much confidence that Moses meant this, and this is what he wished to be understood in this account, as he could have in saying that this is true, whether Moses meant it or something else?

For, behold, O my God, I, 'Thy servant,'[81] have promised

78 For Augustine's theory of signs and signification, cf. *De mag.* 2.3-7.20.
79 Cf. Heb. 3.5.
80 The referent of 'it' may be Moses' intention, or that of God speaking through Moses.
81 Ps. 115.16.

Thee the sacrifice of confessing in these pages, and I pray that through Thy mercy I may fulfill my vow to Thee[82]—behold, how confidently I say that Thou hast made all things, invisible and visible, in Thy immutable Word. But, can I say so confidently that Moses had no other intention than this, when he wrote: 'In the beginning, God made heaven and earth'? While, in Thy Truth, I see this as a certainty, not so, in his mind, do I see that such was his intention when he wrote those words.

Indeed, he could have been thinking about the very commencement of the act of making,[83] when he said: 'In the beginning'; he could have desired 'heaven and earth' to be understood, in this place, not as an already formed and perfected nature, either spiritual or corporeal, but rather as both, in a still inchoative and formless condition. I see, indeed, that whichever one of these things was said, it could have been said truly; but I do not see so well which one of them he was thinking about in these words. Still, whether such a great man was considering in his mind, at the time of writing these words, one of these meanings, or some other one which has not been mentioned by me, I do not doubt that he saw the true one and expressed it fittingly.[84]

Chapter 25

(34) Let no one go on to annoy me by saying: 'Moses did not mean what you say; he meant what I say.' Of course,

---

82 Ps. 21.26.

83 This interpretation is offered by St. Basil, *Hexaëmeron* 1.5, and St. Ambrose, *Hexaëmeron* 1.4.16, who point out that some Greek versions have *en kephalaiōi in* place of *en archei;* cf. Gibb-Montgomery, *ad loc.* 390.6.

84 For a similar expression of confidence, cf. *Enchiridion* 15.59 *ad fin.* (translated by B. M. Peebles as *Faith, Hope and Charity,* in this series)

if he said to me: 'How do you know that Moses' thought corresponds to the interpretation you give of these words of his?'—*that* I ought to endure without getting disturbed; and I might give the same answer, perhaps, that I did above, or a somewhat fuller one, if he were a more difficult opponent. But, when one says: 'He did not mean what you say but what I say,' yet does not deny that both our statements may be true, O Life of the poor, O my God, in whose bosom there is no contradiction, send down a rain of soothing waters into my heart,[85] so that I may tolerate such people with patience! These people do not tell me this because they are godlike men who have seen what they say in the heart of Thy servant, but because they are proud and did not know Moses' meaning; rather, they love their own opinion, not because it is true, but because it is their own. Otherwise, they would love another true one equally, just as I love what they say, when they tell the truth—not because it is theirs, but because it is true, and, precisely because it is true, not theirs either. But, if they love it for this reason, that it is true, then it becomes both theirs and mine, since it is in common for all lovers of truth.[86]

On the contrary, I neither accept nor love the contention of those who say that Moses did not mean what I say, but what they themselves say—because, even if it is right, this is not the boldness of science, but of impudence; not percipience, but insolence, has spawned it.

And that is why, O Lord, Thy judgments are fearful, for Thy truth is not mine, or the property of this or that man, but belongs to us all, whom Thou callest openly to its participation, giving us the dread admonition that we not keep it

85 Gibb-Montgomery (*Conf.* 390.25) call this 'one of the indirect self-reproaches . . . in Augustine.' It seems, rather, a case of typical, Augustinian humor, bordering on exasperation.

86 The contention that truth is common to all human minds that will look upon it is fully developed in *De lib. arb.* 2.8.20;2.10.28.

private, lest we be deprived of it. For, whoever arrogates unto himself alone what Thou dost provide to be enjoyed by all men, and desires as his own what is the possession of all, is driven from the common fund to that which is his own—that is, from truth to a lie. For, he who tells a lie speaks of his own.[87]

(35) Give heed,[88] O best Judge, God, Truth Itself—give heed to my reply to this contradicter, give heed; I speak before Thee and before my brethren who use the law rightly for the purpose of charity.[89] Give heed and behold what I shall say to him, with Thy permission.

For, I return this brotherly and pacifying statement to him: 'Suppose both of us see that what you say is true, and both of us see that what I say is true: where, I ask, do we see it? Certainly, I do not see it in you, nor you in me, but both in that immutable Truth which is above our minds.[90] So, since we are not in disagreement about that light of the Lord our God, why do we disagree about the cogitation of our neighbor, which we cannot see in the same way that the immutable Truth is seen? Because, if Moses himself appeared to us and said: "This is what I was thinking," not even so would we be seeing it—but believing it. So, let not "one be puffed up against the other, over a third party, transgressing what is written."[91] Let us "love the Lord our God with our whole heart, and our whole soul, and with our whole mind, and our neighbor as ourselves."[92] Unless we believe that Moses meant whatever he intended in these Books, in terms of these two precepts,[93] we shall make the Lord a liar,[94]

87 Cf. John 8.44 (modified text).
88 Jer. 18.19.
89 1 Tim. 1.8 and 5.
90 Cf. *De Trin.* 12.14.23.
91 1 Cor. 4.6.
92 Cf. Matt. 22.37-39.
93 Cf. Matt. 22.40.
94 Cf. John 1.10; 5.10.

when we suggest something concerning the mind of our fellow servant which is different from what He has taught. Now, see how foolish it is, amid such an abundance of the truest interpretations which they could take out of these words, to affirm boldly which of these Moses exclusively meant, and to offend this charity by harmful arguments, when charity was the reason for all he said and we are just trying to explain his statements.'

Chapter 26

(36) Yet I, O my God—the exaltation of my lowliness and the rest for my labor, who dost hear[95] my confessions and forgive my sins—since Thou commandest me to love my neighbor as myself, I cannot believe that Thou didst give fewer gifts to Moses, Thy most faithful servant, than I would wish and desire of Thee for myself, provided I had been born in his time and Thou hadst put me in the same place, in order that those writings would be given out through the service of my heart and tongue—those writings which were to benefit all nations so long after, and to overcome the words of all false and proud teachings by their eminent authority throughout the whole world.

Indeed, I should have wished, if I were Moses at that time (do we not all come from the 'same mass,'[96] and 'what is man, if Thou art not mindful of him?'[97]—I should have wished, if I were he at that time, and the order had been given me by Thee to write the Book of Genesis, that such a capacity for eloquent speaking and such a method of fashioning my speech be given me, that those who are as yet

95 Again, a suggestion of dictation?
96 Rom. 9.21: 'Or is not the potter master of his clay, to make from the same mass, one vessel for honorable, another for ignoble use?'
97 Cf. Ps. 8.5.

unable to understand how God creates would not reject my statements as things exceeding their powers; yet those who have become capable of this, whatever true interpretation they come to in their thinking, would not find it overlooked in the brief words of Thy servant; and, if some other man saw another interpretation in the light of the Truth, this meaning would not fail to be discoverable in these same words.

Chapter 27

(37) Just as a spring, within its small space, supplies a more abundant flow over wider areas by virtue of the many streams which it feeds than do any one of these streams which lead away from this spring through many regions, so, too, does the story told by the original dispenser of Thine, which was to supply many who would speak of it in the future, cause to bubble forth, by the tiny flow of Thy word, floods of clear truth, from which each man may draw the truth that he is able to get concerning these things—one man one truth, another man another—through the longer windings of their discussions.

For, some people, reading or hearing these words [of Scripture], think that God, like a man or like some huge mass provided with an immense power, using some novel and suddenly formed plan, made beyond Himself, in distant places, as it were, heaven and earth, two great bodies, above and below, in which all things were to be contained. And when they hear: 'God said, Let this or that be made, and it was made,'[98] they think of words which begin and are ended, sounding and passing away in periods of time, and that, after their passing away, what was commanded to come forth immediately did come into existence. And they have the

98 *fiat illud*: here *illud* has the force of 'such-and-such.'

same notions about whatever other things they think of in this way through physical associations.

In these people, who are still thinking on the sense level as little children, while their weakness is being borne in manner of speech, as if in the womb of a mother, this lowly faith is built up in a healthful way, and by it they possess and hold as certain that God made all the natures which their sense power observes round about them in wonderful variety.

If any one of them, having spurned the alleged inelegance of Thy words, stretches himself, in his proud weakness, beyond the nest where he has been nourished—ah! he will fall, poor man, and then, O Lord God, have mercy,[99] lest the passersby trample[100] this unplumed pullet. 'Send Thy angel'[101] to put him back in his nest, so that he may live until he can fly!

Chapter 28

(38) Other people, for whom these words are now no longer a nest, but shady thickets, see the fruits hiding in them, and they fly around joyfully, chirping as they look for them, and pluck them.[102] They see, as they read or hear these words of Thine, O God Eternal, that all periods of past and future time are transcended by Thy stable duration, yet that there is not any temporal creature which Thou hast not made. And by Thy will, because it is what Thou art and had not been changed in any way, and without the rising within it of a will which had not been there before, Thou

99 Cf. Ps. 50.3.
100 Cf. Job 39.15.
101 Cf. 2 Mac. 15.23.
102 Those who 'fly around joyfully' are the men who are somewhat advanced in wisdom, who may be able to see the truth from various points of view. Augustine is now in very good humor, chuckling over his metaphors.

didst make all things, not from Thyself, in Thy likeness, which is the form of all things, but from nothing, a formless thing not at all after Thy likeness, yet capable of being formed after Thy likeness, returning to Thee, who art one, according to its preappointed capacity, as far as it was granted to each thing after its kind. And so, all things were made very good, whether they remained round about Thee, or were gradually more removed in space, through time and place, as they worked or suffered beautiful alterations.

They see these things and rejoice in the light of Thy Truth, to the small extent that they are able, here below.

(39) And another man directs his attention to this statement: 'In the beginning, God created,' and he regards wisdom as 'the beginning,' because it also does speak[103] to us. Likewise, another man directs his attention to the same words and understands 'the beginning' to mean the commencement of created things. Thus, he takes: 'In the beginning, He made,' as if the statement were: 'At first,[104] He made.'

Then, among those who understand 'in the beginning' as meaning that Thou didst make heaven and earth, in wisdom, one man believes that this 'heaven and earth' is the matter which could serve for the creation of heaven and earth and called by that name; another man believes that the natures are already formed and separated; another, that one nature is formed and it is spiritual (under the name, heaven), and that there is another nature, formless, of corporeal matter (under the name, earth). But, those who understand, under the names, heaven and earth, the as yet formless matter from which the heaven and earth were to be formed, are also far from understanding it in one way: one man re-

103 Cf. John 8.25.

104 Cf. St. Ambrose, *Hexaëm.* 1.8.28: 'therefore, God first [*primo*] made heaven and earth.

gards it as that out of which the intelligible and sensible creation was to be perfected, while another regards it only as that out of which this sensible and corporeal mass was to come, containing in its vast bosom these observable and visible natures.

Nor do these people who think that, in this text, 'heaven and earth' designate organized and distinct parts of creation understand this interpretation in but one way; rather, one man thinks of both the invisible and the visible world, while another takes them as restricted to the visible world in which we behold the glowing heavens and the darkened earth, and the things which exist in them.

Chapter 29

(40) However, he who simply takes 'In the beginning, He made,' as if the statement were 'At first, He made,' has no truthful way of understanding heaven and earth, unless he understands 'the matter' of heaven and earth; namely, of the whole of things, that is, both intelligible and sensible creation. For, if he wanted to take it as the already formed universe, then he could quite properly be asked: 'If God made this first, what did He make later?' He will find nothing after the universe, and thus he will unwillingly face the question: 'What does that phrase *at first* mean, if there is nothing *after*?'

Indeed, if he says that the formless is first and then it is formed, he is not unreasonable, provided he is able to distinguish what is first from the point of view of eternity, of time, of choice, and of origin. In eternity, for instance, God is prior to all things; in time, the flower is prior to the fruit; in choice, the fruit is prior to the flower; and in origin, the sound is prior to the song.

Of these four, the first and last instances that I have noted are very difficult to understand; the middle two are quite easy. Indeed, it is a rare and exceedingly difficult vision, O Lord, to see Thy eternity immutably making mutable things and thus prior in this way. Then, too, who can see such a fine point with his mind that he is able to distinguish without great effort how the sound is prior to the song? The fact is that the song is a formed sound, and a thing can certainly exist without being formed; but, a thing that does not exist cannot be formed. Thus, material is prior to that which is made from it, not prior in the sense that it produces it actively, for its part here is passive instead, nor prior by a period of time. For, we do not emit formless sounds in prior time, without the song, and then arrange and fashion them into the form of a song in a later period of time, as wood is used in making a box, or silver is fashioning a dish. Of course, such kinds of matter precede even in time the forms of the things made from them.

But in a song, it is not that way. When it is sung, its sound is heard, not as first sounding in a formless way and then being formed into the song. Whatever thing sounded at first in whatever way has passed away, and you cannot find any part of it that you might pick up and put together by means of art. So, the song has its being[105] in its sound; the sound of it is its material. And this receives a form so that the song may exist. Hence, as I was saying, the material in the act of sounding is prior to the form of the act of singing: not prior as through the power to make it, for sound is not the artificer of the act of singing, but it is supplied as a subject, from the body of the singer, to his soul, as that from which he may make the song. Nor is it prior in time, for it is uttered together with the song. Nor is it prior in choice, for the sound

105 *vertitur*: see the note on this middle use of *verti*, in Gibb-Montgomery, *Conf.* p. 397.30.

is not preferable to the song, since the song is not only a sound, but also a beautifully formed sound. But, it is prior in origin, because the song is not formed so that the sound may exist; rather, the sound is formed so that the song may exist.

With this example, let him who can, understand that the matter of things is first made and called heaven and earth, because from it heaven and earth have been made. But, it was not made first in time, because it was the very forms of things that gave rise to periods of time. This matter was formless and now it is observed along with periods of time, yet, no account of it can be given, unless it be treated as if it were prior in time. In importance, it is last, for formed things are plainly better than unformed things, and it is preceded by the eternity of the Creator, so that the matter out of which something was to be made might itself be from nothing.

Chapter 30

(41) In this diversity of true opinions may truth itself produce concord, and may our God have mercy on ours, so that we may use the Law rightly, for pure charity,[106] the purpose of the commandment.

And so, if anyone asks me which of these Moses, that servant of Thine, meant, these are not the words of my confessions, if I do not confess to Thee: 'I do not know.' Yet, I do know that these are true opinions, with the exception of the fleshly ones, and I have told how much I thought of them. May these words of Thy Book, exalted in humility and brief in abundance, not terrify, however, those 'little ones' who are living in good hope.

But, let all of us whom I acknowledge to see and speak the truths in these words love each other and also love Thee, our

106 1 Tim. 1.8. and 5.

God, the Fountain of truth, if we thirst for truth itself and not for vanities. And Thy servant,[107] the dispenser of this Scripture, imbued with Thy spirit, let us so honor him as to believe that, in writing these words, he had in view, by Thy revelation, that meaning which chiefly stands out among them, both in the light of truth and in the fruit of utility.

Chapter 31

(42) So, when one man has said: 'He meant the same as I,' and another: 'Not that but what I mean,' I think I can say in a more religious way: 'Why not both, instead, if both are true? And, if there is a third, and a fourth, and any other truths that anyone sees in these words, why may it not be believed that he saw all these, and that, through him, the one God has tempered the sacred writings to the perceptions of many people, in which they will see things which are true and also different?'

As for me (and I am saying this from my heart, without any fear), were I writing something aimed at the highest authority, I should prefer to write in such a way that each man could take whatever truth about these things my words suggested, rather than to put down one true opinion so plainly as to exclude other opinions, even if there were no falsity in them to offend me. I refuse, then, O my God, to be so rash as not to believe that this man[108] deserved as much of Thee. He knew full well, and thought as he was writing them, whatever truth we have been able to find in these words here below, and whatever we have not been able—or not yet been able—to discover, provided it can be found in them.

---

107 Moses.
108 Again, Moses is meant.

Chapter 32

(43) Finally, O Lord, who art God, not flesh and blood, if man failed to see something, could anything be hidden from Thy good Spirit, 'Who shall lead me into the right land,'[109]—whatever it was in these words that Thou wert to reveal to future readers, even if he through whom they were said considered perhaps only one meaning out of the many true ones? And, if this is so, may the one that he thought, then, be more excellent than the rest. But, for us, O Lord, do Thou show either that one, or some other true one, as it pleases. Thus, whether Thou dost manifest unto us the same thing as to that man of Thine, or another suggested from the same words, still mayest Thou nourish us and may error not deceive us.

See, O Lord my God, how much we have written about a few words[110]—how much, I pray Thee! What capacities of ours, what periods of time, would be adequate for all Thy Books in this manner?

Permit me, then, to confess more briefly to Thee, in regard to them, and to choose but one true meaning which Thou wilt have inspired, a certain and good interpretation, even though many may come to mind, where many were possible—this being the understanding of this my confession, that, if I should say what Thy helper meant, it is right and best (this it is my duty to try to do), and, if I am not successful in this, that I should at least say what Thy Truth wished to tell me through Its words, that Truth which also told him[111] what It willed.

---

109 Ps. 142.10.

110 All this speculation in Bk. 12 has been suggested by the first two verses of the first chapter of the Book of Genesis! In none of his commentaries does Augustine give a full exposition of the full text of the Book of Genesis.

111 Moses.

BOOK THIRTEEN

Chapter 1

I INVOKE THEE,[1] O my God, my Mercy,[2] who hast made me—Thou didst not forget even when Thou wert forgotten. I invoke Thee into my soul, which Thou dost prepare to receive Thee through the desire that Thou inspirest into it.[3] Do not abandon me as I invoke Thee now, Thou who didst come to my aid before[4] I uttered any invocation, and who didst repeatedly instruct me by many sorts of calls, so that I might listen from afar off and be turned back, and call upon Thee as Thou wert calling me.

Indeed, O Lord, Thou hast erased all my demerits, not recompensing the work of my hands, with which I have worked rebelliously against Thee; and Thou hast led the way in all my meritorious actions, so as to recompense[5] the

1 Cf. above, 1.1.1-2, for a similar invocation.
2 Ps. 58.18.
3 Cf. Ps. 9.17 *bis* (Ps. 10 sec. Heb.)
4 Cf. *Enchiridion* 9.32 (trans. by Peebles, p. 397): Man's good will precedes many of God's gifts, but not all; and among those which it does not precede it must itself be counted.' (Then, Augustine cites Ps. 58.11, and 22.6.)
5 Cf. *Epist.* 194.19: 'when God crowns our meritorious actions, He crowns nothing but His own gifts.

work of Thy hands, with which Thou hast made me. For, before I existed, Thou wert; nor was I any being, to whom Thou mightest grant the fact of my existence. Yet, here I am as a result of Thy goodness which preceded all this, both the fact that Thou hast made me and that from which Thou hast made me. For, Thou hadst no need of me,[6] nor am I the kind of good thing that Thou wouldst use as a help, my Lord and my God. My service to Thee is not such as to prevent Thy becoming fatigued in action, or the diminishing of Thy power through lack of my compliance. Nor is my cultivation necessary to Thee, as if Thou wert earth, and wouldst remain uncultivated if I do not cultivate Thee; rather, the purpose of my service to Thee and my cultivation of Thee is in order that I may have well-being from Thee,[7] who art the Author of my being capable of well-being.

Chapter 2

(2) In fact, Thy whole creation derives its existence as a separate being from the fullness of Thy goodness, in order that a good thing (which would be of no advantage to Thee, nor be something emanating as an equal from Thee[8]) might yet—when its creation by Thee[9] was possible—not fail to be.

How did heaven and earth, which Thou madest in the be-

6 Cf. *Contra advers. legis et prophet.* 1.4.6; *Enarr. in ps.* 70.2.6

7 Cf. *De Gen. ad lit.* 8.11.24: 'In fact, He has no need of our service, but we are in need of His regulation, so that He may work and take care of us . .'

8 *de te*: this would suggest an emanation out of the very substance of God; hence, in denying this mode of production, Augustine is avoiding a pantheistic origination of the universe.

9 *ex te*: as used by Augustine this expression does not imply that creatures *come out of* God, as from a material cause; as Gibb-Montgomery note (*Conf.* 403.11), Augustine uses *ex te* consistently to denote creative production.

ginning, merit anything of Thee? I should like to be told through what claim upon Thee spiritual and corporeal nature, which Thou madest in Thy wisdom, deserved that there should depend upon that wisdom even inchoate and formless things, each in its own kind, whether spiritual or corporeal, inclining toward immoderation and toward an extreme dissimilarity to Thee—for a formless spiritual thing is better than if it were a formed body, while a formless corporeal thing is better than if it were nothing at all—that these should thus, as formless things, depend upon Thy Word, unless they were called back to Thy unity by this same Word, and were formed, and were all very good through Thee, the one, highest Good. How had they deserved it of Thee, to exist even as formless things, for they would not have been even that, unless from Thee?

(3) How did corporeal material deserve of Thee, to be even invisible and unorganized, since it would not have been that, unless because Thou didst make it? And so, because it was not, it could not merit from Thee its existence.

Or, how did the inchoative spiritual creation merit from Thee, even to ebb and flow darkly like the abyss, but unlike Thee, unless it were turned by the same Word to the same Being by whom it was made, and, enlightened by Him, could become light[10]—though not as an equal, but still conformed to a form equal to Thee?[11]

For, just as for a body it is not the same thing to be as to be beautiful—otherwise a bodily thing could not be de-

10 Plotinus says much the same thing, as far as the verbal formula goes: 'In order that it [*the soul*] may be enlightened and know its own possessions, it must direct its attention to Him who enlightens it' (*Ennead.* 1.2.4). This does not necessarily mean that the Augustinian concept of the relation of the human soul to God is identical with the Plotinian relation of soul to the One.

11 On the *conformation* of a created spirit, by being turned to the Light of Wisdom, and its *deformation* by aversion from God, cf. *De Gen. ad lit.* 1.5.10.

formed—so, also, it is not the same for a created spirit to be alive and to live wisely—othewise a spirit would invariably be wise. 'But it is good' for it 'to adhere'[12] to Thee always, lest it lose by aversion the light acquired by conversion, and slip back into a life like an abyss of darkness.

For we, too, who are spiritual creatures by virtue of our soul, were once in this life darkness,[13] when we were turned away from Thee, our Light, and we still labor in the remnants of our obscurity, until we may become Thy justice[14] in Thy only Son, like the mountains of God; for we were 'Thy judgments,' like 'a great abyss.'[15]

Chapter 3

(4) Now, what Thou didst say in the first moments of creation:[16] 'Be light made, and light was made,'[17] I understand, not inappropriately, in reference to spiritual creation; for it was already life of some sort which Thou mightest illumine. But, just as it had not merited from Thee that it should be a life capable of being illumined, so, too, now that it existed, it did not deserve of Thee that it be illumined. Nor would its formlessness have pleased Thee, unless it became light, not by its act of existing, but by the act of gazing upon the illuminating light and by cleaving to it. Thus did it owe both the fact that it lived at all, and the fact that it lived

12 Cf. Ps. 72.28.
13 Eph. 5.8.
14 2 Cor. 5.21.
15 Ps. 35.7: 'Thy justice is as the mountains of God: thy judgments are a great deep.' In his commentary on this text (*Enarr. in ps.* 35.10), Augustine interprets the 'mountains' as the few good people in the Church, and the 'deep' (*abyssus*) as the many bad members.
16 *conditio*: this means the original founding, or creating of beings, as distinguished from their consequent growth under divine government.
17 Gen. 1.3.

happily, to nothing but Thy grace[18]—having been turned, through a better change, to that which cannot be changed either for better or for worse. That Being Thou art alone, because Thou alone dost exist without qualification; to Thee it is not one thing to live, and another thing to live happily, for Thou art Thine own Beatitude.

Chapter 4

(5) What, then, could be lacking to Thee, in regard to the good which Thou art for Thyself, even if these things had been completely non-existent or had remained formless? Thou didst not make them because of need, but because of the fullness of Thy goodness,[19] limiting and turning them toward a form—not that Thy joy is made more perfect by virtue of them. Their imperfection is indeed displeasing to Thee, as a Perfect Being; thus, they are perfected from Thee and they please Thee—not, however, in the sense that Thou dost need to be perfected, as an imperfect being, through their perfection. For, Thy good 'Spirit moved over the waters';[20] He was not supported by them, as if He rested upon them. For, when Thy Spirit is said to rest upon beings, He makes them repose upon Himself.[21] But, Thy will, incorruptible and immutable, being wholly self-sufficient within itself, was carried over that life which Thou hadst made, for which to live and to live happily are not the same thing, for it lives even when fluctuating in its own darkness. To it there remains nothing but to turn to Him by whom it was made, and

18 Cf. *De civ. Dei* 11.24.

19 Plato (*Timaeus* 29D) gives a very similar explanation for the production of the universe by the World-Maker; he is good and wishes other beings to be like himself. Cf. *Ennead.* 5.4.1; Athanasius, *De Incarnatione* 3.3.

20 Gen. 1.2.

21 Cf. Num. 11.25; Isa. 11.2.

to live more and more in the presence of the Fountain of life, and to see the light in His Light,[22] and thus to be perfected, illumined and beatified.

Chapter 5

(6) Behold, the Trinity appears to me, 'in an obscure manner.'[23] And Thou art It, O my God, since Thou, the Father, didst make 'heaven and earth' in the beginning of our wisdom, that is, in Thy Wisdom born of Thee, equal and co-eternal with Thee; that is, in Thy Son.[24] We have said much about the heaven of heaven, and the invisible and unorganized earth, and the abyss darkened in respect of the wayward flux of spiritual formlessness, unless it had turned to Him who is the Author of every sort of life, and became a beautifully formed life through illumination.[25] Thus would it become His 'heaven of heaven' which was made later between water and water.[26]

And, now, I understood the Father, in the name of God who made these things, and the Son in the name of the Principle [Beginning][27] in whom He made them; and, believing as I did that my God is the Trinity, I was seeking It in His holy words, and behold: Thy 'Spirit moved over the waters.'[28] Behold it, O my God, the Trinity is the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Creator of the whole creation!

22 Cf. Ps. 35.10.
23 1 Cor. 13.12.
24 In the divine Trinity, Augustine regards the Son as especially identified with Wisdom, the Holy Spirit as associated with Love. Cf. Augustine's summary of his beliefs concerning the Trinity: *De Trin.* 1.4.7.
25 While the results of divine illumination are most often located in the order of truth of knowledge and judgment, it must be noted that the effect of God's Light upon a created spirit (angelic nature or human soul) is also metaphysical and moral. Cf. *Enarr. in ps.* 57.1.
26 Cf. Gen. 1.6.
27 On the Son as *Principium* of creation, cf. *De Gen. ad lit.* 1.6.12.
28 Gen. 1.2.

Chapter 6

(7) But what was the reason, O truthful Light—I bring my heart close to Thee; lest it teach me useless things, burst its shadows asunder; tell me, I beseech Thee, through Mother Charity,[29] I beseech Thee, tell me—what was the reason that, after the heaven and the invisible and unorganized earth and the darkness over the abyss had been named, Thy Scripture only then names Thy Spirit? Was it because He had to be introduced in that way, so that He might be said to 'move over'? This could not be said, unless there first were mentioned things over which Thy Spirit could be understood to have been moved. For, He did not 'move over' the Father, or the Son, and He could not rightly be said to have moved over, if He moved over nothing. And so, that over which He was moved had to be mentioned first, and then He whom it was not fitting to mention otherwise, except to say that He was moved over. When, then, was it not fitting that He be introduced otherwise than by saying that He was moved over?

Chapter 7

(8) Now, from this point on, let him who can, follow in his understanding Thy Apostle who says that Thy 'charity is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us;'[30] and who teaches about spiritual things,[31] showing us the super-eminent way of charity and bending His knee to Thee for us, so that we may learn the super-eminent knowledge of Christ's charity.[32] And so, being super-eminent from the commencement, He moved over the waters.

29 For an explanation of the phrase, *mater caritas, cf. Tract. in Joan.* 2.4; *Enarr. in ps.* 147.14.
30 Rom. 5.5.
31 Cf. 1 Cor. 12.1.
32 Cf. Eph. 3.14 and 19.

To whom shall I speak, how shall I speak of the weight of concupiscence pulling down into the steep abyss, and of the uplifting power of charity through Thy Spirit, who moved over the waters? To whom shall I speak, how shall I say it? For, here are no places in which we are submerged and from which we emerge. (What analogy could be truer, what analogy more false?) Here, rather, are feelings, here are loves: the impurity of our spirit flowing down lower, because of the love of things which are cares; and Thy holiness lifting us up higher, because of the love of freedom from care,[33] so that we lift up our heart[34] to Thee, where Thy Spirit moves above the waters, and we may come to supereminent repose, when our soul will have passed through the waters which are without substance.[35]

Chapter 8

(9) The angel fell, the soul of man fell, and they demonstrated the depth of the whole of spiritual creation in the dark abyss, hadst Thou not said from the commencement: 'Be light made', and, had light not been made, and every obedient mind in Thy heavenly City clung to Thee and rested in Thy Spirit, who moved immutably over every mutable thing. Otherwise, the very heaven of heaven would have been in itself a dark abyss; now, however, it is light in the Lord.[36] For, even in that wretched restlessness of the spirits who fell and manifested their own darkness, after having been stripped of the garment of Thy Light, Thou dost give sufficient evi-

33 For the relation of *libertas* and *securitas*, cf. *De lib. arb.* 2.13.37.
34 *sursum cor*: an echo of the *'Sursum corda. Habemus ad Dominum,'* which introduces the Preface in the liturgy of the Mass.
35 Cf. Ps. 123.5. Augustine's Latin version differs from the Vulgate. *Enarr. in ps.* 129.9 explains: 'What is water without substance, unless the water of sins without substance? For sins have no substance . . .'
36 Eph. 5.8.

dence of how great Thou didst make the rational creature, for whom nothing whatever, less than Thee, is in any way adequate to provide for its happy repose,[37] not even its very self. For, it is Thou, our God, who wilt enlighten our darknesses; from Thee do our garments take their origin, and our darknesses shall be like the midday.

Give Thyself to me, O my God, and restore Thyself to me: behold, I do love Thee, and, if it is a weak love, let me love more strongly. I cannot measure so as to know how much love is lacking in me for that sufficiency wherein my life may hasten into Thy embraces and not turn away before it is hidden 'in the secret of Thy Face.'[38] This only do I know, that it goes ill with me except in Thee, not only outside myself, but within myself; all my abundance, if it be not my God, is but indigence.

Chapter 9

(10) But, did neither the Father nor the Son 'move over the waters'? If we understand this as a movement in place, like a body—then, neither did the Holy Spirit. But, if it was the eminence of immutable Divinity that is over every mutable thing—then, the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit 'moved over the waters.'

Why, then, was this said only of Thy Spirit? Why was this quasi-place which is not a place, where He might be, mentioned only of Him, concerning whom alone the statement was made that He is Thy Gift?[39] In Thy Gift we find our

37 For an elimination of all lesser goods, and a demonstration that God is the only ultimate End for man, cf. *De civ. Dei* 19.4; 22.1.

38 Ps. 30.21. In his *Enarr. in ps.* 30.4.8, Augustine says that this means: 'if in this world you will receive Him in your heart, after this world He will receive you in His Face.'

39 Cf. Acts 2.38, and *De Trin.* 15.18.32.

repose; there do we enjoy Thee. Our repose—that is our 'place.'

Love lifts us up to it and Thy Good Spirit lifts up our lowliness 'from the gates of death.'[40] Peace for us lies in good will.[41] The body inclines by its weight toward its own place. A weight[42] is not necessarily an inclination toward the lowest level, but to its proper place. Fire inclines upward; a stone, downward. They are moved by their weights; they seek their places. Oil poured out below water rises above the water; water poured on oil sinks beneath the oil. They are moved by their weights; they seek their own places. When not well ordered, they are restless; when they are in order, then they are at rest. My weight is my love; by it I am carried whereever I am carried. By Thy Gift we are inflamed and are carried upward; we are set on fire and we go. We ascend the 'steps of the heart'[43] and sing a canticle of the steps.[44] By Thy Fire,[45] by Thy Good Fire, we are set on fire and we go; for we go upward to the 'peace of Jersualem,' for 'I rejoiced at those who said to me: we shall go into the house of the Lord.'[46] There shall good will give us our place, so that we desire nothing more than 'to abide their forever.'[47]

Chapter 10

(11) Happy the creature who has known nothing else! Though it would have been something else, if, as soon as it

40 Ps. 9.15.
41 Cf. Luke 2.14.
42 On the *pondus* theory and Augustine's teaching on love, cf. *De civ. Dei* 11.28; *Epist.* 55.10.18; 157.2.9.
43 Cf. Ps. 83.6.
44 Psalms 119-133 are *gradual* canticles; taken figuratively as representing the steps of the soul to Heaven. Cf. *Enarr. in ps.* 119.1.
45 Tongues of fire are the symbol of the Holy Spirit.
46 Ps. 121.6,1.
47 Cf. Ps. 60.8.

was made, without any time interval, it had not been borne upward by Thy Gift which moves over every mutable thing—by that call whereby Thou didst say: 'Be light made,'[48] and so it became light. For, in us, there is a difference between the time when we belonged to darkness and when we were made light.[49] But, in the case of that creature, it was said what it would have been if it had not been illumined; and thus it was said, as if it were at first unstable and darkened, so that the cause, by which it was made to exist differently, would be evident; that is, became light by being turned toward the never-failing Light. Let him who can, understand; let him seek it from Thee. Why should he come troubling me, as if I could 'enlighten any man who comes into this world'?[50]

Chapter 11

(12) Who understands the Almighty Trinity? Yet, who does not speak of It—if it is really of It that he speaks. It is a rare soul who, saying anything whatever concerning the Trinity, knows of what he speaks. They argue, and engage in controversies, yet no one may see this vision without peace.

Here are three things I should like men to cogitate upon within themselves. These three things are far different from that Trinity, but I mention them so that men may think them over carefully, test them, and realize how distant they are from the Trinity.

Now, I speak of these three: to be, to know, to will.[51] For, I am, I know, and I will. I am a knowing and willing

48 Gen. 1.3.
49 Cf. Eph. 5.8.
50 John 1.9.
51 For a more ample statement of the analogy between the divine Trinity and the triad of being, knowing and willing, cf. *De Trin.* 9.4.3-5.8; *De civ. Dei* 11.26.

being; I know that I am and that I will; I will to be and to know.

Let him who can, then, see in these three how inseparable life is, for it is one life, one mind, and one essence—in short, how inseparable is the distinction and yet there is a distinction. Each man confronts the evidence within himself; let him pay attention to it within himself, and see it, and tell me about it.

But, when he finds and can speak of something among these things, let him not form the opinion that he has already found that which exists immutably above these things—what is immutably, knows immutably, and wills immutably. Is the Trinity in God because of these three, or are these three in each [Person] in such fashion that all three things belong to each; or is the Selfsame, in the abundant greatness of unity, both wondrously simple and yet multiple, by being unlimited in Itself and yet Its own limit, whereby It is, and is known to Itself, and is immutably satisfying to Itself—who could easily grasp this in cogitation? Who could express it in any way? Who would be so rash as to voice any sort of judgment on it?

Chapter 12

(13) Go ahead in your confession, O my faith. Say unto thy Lord God: Holy, holy, holy,[52] O Lord my God. In Thy Name[53] we have been baptized, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—because God has made a 'heaven and earth among us also, in His Christ: the spiritual and carnal members of His Church. Before it received the form of doctrine, our 'earth was invisible and unorganized,' and we were covered by the

52 Cf. Isa. 6.3.
53 Cf. Matt. 28.19.

darknesses of ignorance; for, 'Thou hast corrected man for iniquity'[54] and 'Thy judgments are a great deep.'[55]

But, because Thy Spirit 'moved over the water,' Thy mercy did not abandon our misery, and so Thou saidst: 'Be light made.' 'Repent, for the kindgom of Heaven is at hand.'[56] Repent; be light made. And, since our soul had been troubled within us,[57] we became mindful of Thee, O Lord, 'from the land of Jordan and from the little hill'[58] which is equal to Thee, but little for our sake. And our darknesses were displeasing to us, and we were turned toward Thee, and 'light was made.' And, behold, we were 'once darknesses but now are light in the Lord.'[59]

Chapter 13

(14) And yet thus far 'by faith,' not yet 'by sight.'[60] 'For in hope were we saved. But hope that is seen is not hope.'[61] Still does 'the deep call on the deep,' but now 'in the voice of Thy flood-gates.'[62] Yet, even he who says: 'I could not speak to you as to spiritual but only as to carnal men,'[63] even he does not yet think that he himself has laid hold of it, but, 'forgetting what is behind,'[64] he presses on to those things which are ahead, and he sighs under his burden,[65] and his 'soul thirsts for the living

54 Ps. 38.12.
55 Ps. 35.7.
56 Matt. 3.2.
57 Cf. Ps. 41.7.
58 For the 'little hill' symbolizing Christ, cf. Ps. 41.7.
59 Eph. 5.8.
60 2 Cor. 5.7.
61 Rom. 8.24.
62 Ps. 41.8. The *Enarr. in ps.* 41.8.13, explains that the 'deep calling the deep' is the voice of one man instructing another, under the flooding inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
63 1 Cor. 3.1.
64 Phil. 3.13.
65 2 Cor. 5.4.

God,'[66] 'as the hart pants for the fountains of water'[67]—and he says: 'When shall I reach it?'[68] 'Yearning to be clothed with that dwelling of his which is from Heaven,'[69] he calls to the lower deep and says: 'Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed in the newness of your mind,'[70] and: 'Do not become children in mind, but in malice be children, that you may be perfect in mind,'[71] and: 'O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?'[72] But, now, no longer in his own voice, but in Thine, who has sent Thy Spirit from on high through Him who ascended on high and opened up the 'flood-gates' of His gifts, so that the stream of the river might make Thy City joyful.[73]

For Him does the 'friend of the bridegroom'[74] sigh, having already in his possession the 'first fruits of the Spirit,' but, still groaning in himself, looking forward to adoption, the redemption of his body.[75] For Him does he sigh—he is a member of the bride;[76] and he is full of zeal for Him—for he is a friend of the Bridegroom; for Him he is full of zeal, not for himself, because in the voice of Thy flood-gates, not in his own voice, does he call upon the other deep, for whom he is fearful in his zeal, 'lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his guile,'[77] so also may their minds be corrupted from the chastity which is in our Bridegroom, Thy only Son. What is that light of beauty, when we shall see Him as He is,[78]

66 Ps. 41.3.
67 Ps. 41.2.
68 Cf. Ps. 41.3.
69 Cf. 2 Cor. 5.2.
70 Rom. 12.2.
71 1 Cor. 14.20.
72 Gal. 3.1.
73 Cf. Ps. 45.5.
74 Cf. John 3.29.
75 Cf. Rom. 8.23.
76 I.e., a member of the Body of Christ.
77 2 Cor. 11.3.
78 1 John 3.2.

and they shall have passed away, 'the tears that have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: Where is thy God?'[79]

Chapter 14

(15) And I say: O my God, where art Thou? Behold, where art Thou? I take my breath[80] a little, in Thee, when I pour out my soul above myself with the voice of joy and praise the noise of one celebrating a feast.[81] And still it is sad because it slips back and becomes a deep, or, rather, it realizes that it still is a deep. My faith says to it, that faith which Thou has kindled before my steps in the night: 'Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou trouble me? Hope in the Lord';[82] His 'word is a lamp to thy feet.'[83] Hope and persevere, till the night passes, the mother of the wicked, until the anger of the Lord passes, whose children even we were, being at one time in darkness, bearing its vestiges in our body, dead by reason of sin,[84] 'till the day break and the shadows retire.'[85] Hope in the Lord: 'in the morning I will stand before Thee and will see';[86] 'I shall always give praise unto Him. In the morning I will stand and see the salvation of my countenance,'[87] my God, who will give life even to our mortal bodies because of the Spirit who dwells in us,[88] for He moved mercifully over our dark and flowing inner life. Hence, in this pilgrimage we have received a pledge that we may now be light, while as yet we have been saved by hope, being 'chil-

79 Ps. 41.4.
80 Cf. Job. 32.20.
81 Cf. Ps. 41.5.
82 Ps. 41.6.
83 Cf. Ps. 118.105.
84 Cf. Rom. 8.10.
85 Cant. 2.17.
86 Ps. 5.5.
87 Ps. 42.6.
88 Cf. Rom. 8.11.

dren of the light and children of the day, not children of night nor of darkness,'[89] as we were.

Between them and us, Thou alone, in this present uncertainty of human knowledge, canst distinguish—Thou who provest our hearts,[90] and callest the light day and the darkness night.[91] For, who can see us clearly but Thee? Indeed, what have we that we have not received from Thee,[92] we who are vessels for honorable use formed from that same mass from which others, for ignoble use, were made?[93]

Chapter 15

(16) Or, who but Thee, our God, hast made for us a firmament of authority[94] over us, in Thy divine Scripture? For 'the heavens shall be folded together as a book,'[95] and now it is stretched over us like a skin. Indeed, Thy divine Scripture is of more sublime authority, now that those mortals, through whom Thou didst dispense it to us, have suffered an earthly death. And Thou knowest, O Lord, Thou knowest how Thou didst clothe men with skins, when they became mortal by reason of sin.[96] Just so, Thou hast stretched out the firmament of Thy Book like a skin, Thy wonderfully harmonious words which Thou has imposed upon us through the instrumentality of mortal men. Indeed, by the very death of these men, the firm establishment of authority in Thy writings put out by them is sublimely extended over all things subject to them, when, while they were living here

89 Cf. 1 Thess. 5.5.
90 Cf. 1 Thess. 2.4.
91 Gen. 1.5.
92 Cf. 1 Cor. 4.7.
93 Cf. Rom. 9.21.
94 Cf. *Enarr. in ps.* 103.1.8.
95 Isa. 34.4.
96 Cf. Gen. 3.21.

below, it was not so sublimely extended. Thou hadst not yet spread out the heaven like a skin; Thou hadst not yet broadcast the renown of their death in all directions.

(17) May we see, O Lord, the 'heavens, the works of Thy fingers'; clear away from our eyes the cloud by which Thou hast enveloped them. There is Thy 'testimony giving wisdom to the little ones.'[97] Perfect, O my God, Thy praise out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings.[98] For, we know no other books so destructive of pride, so destructive of the enemy and the advocate[99] who resists Thy reconciliation by defending his sins. I do not know, O Lord, I do not know any other words so chaste, which so move me to confession and make my neck bend to Thy yoke and encourage unstinted devotion to Thee. May I understand them, O good Father; grant this to me who has been made subject to them, for Thou hast established them for those who are subject to them.

(18) There are, I believe, some waters above this firmament—immortal and removed from earthly corruption. Let them praise Thy Name, let them praise Thee—the supercelestial societies of Thy angels, who have no need to look up at this firmament and to know Thy word by reading. For, they see Thy face always and they read there, without temporal syllables, what Thy eternal will desires. They are reading, choosing, and loving;[100] they read forever, and what they read never passes away. For, by choosing and by loving, they read the very immutability of Thy counsel. Their book is never closed, nor is their scroll rolled up, for Thou Thyself art this for them and art so eternally, because Thou hast arranged them above this firmament which Thou hast

97 Ps. 8.4; 18.8.
98 Ps. 8.3.
99 *defensorem*: on the use of this term in the Old Lat. text of Ps. 8.3, rather than the Vulgate's *ultorem* (avenger), see B. M. Peebles' translation of Sulpicius Severus in *Fathers of the Church* 7, p. 116 n. 5.
100 The Latin is: *legunt, eligunt et diligunt.*

made firm above the infirmity of the members of a lower society, where they may look up and learn of Thy mercy which proclaims Thee in time, Thee who hast made times. For, 'O Lord, Thy mercy is in heaven and Thy truth reaches even to the clouds.'[101] The clouds pass away, but the heavens remain. The preachers of Thy Word pass from this life to another life, but Thy Scripture extends over the peoples until the end of the centuries. Yea, even heaven and earth will pass away, but Thy words shall not pass away.[102] For, the skin shall be folded up, and the 'grass,' over which it was spread, shall pass away with its beauty, but Thy word abides forever.[103] And it now appears to us in the obscurity of clouds and through the mirror of the sky, not just as it is; because, even though we are the beloved of Thy Son, 'it has not yet appeared what we shall be.'[104] He gazed through the veil of flesh, He spoke lovingly and made us ardent, and we ran after His odor.[105] But, 'when He appears, we shall be like to Him, for we shall see Him just as He is:'[106] just as He is, O Lord, it is ours to see, but it is not yet for us.

Chapter 16

(19) Indeed, just as Thou dost exist absolutely, Thou alone dost really know—Thou who existest immutably and knowest immutably and willest immutably, as Thy essence knows and wills immutably, Thy knowledge exists and wills immutably, and Thy will exists and knows immutably. Nor does it seem right before Thee for the immutable Light to be known by the illuminated but mutable creature in the same

101 Ps. 35.6.
102 Cf. Matt. 24.35.
103 Cf. Isa. 40.7-8.
104 1 John 3.2.
105 Cant. 1.3.
106 1 John 3.2.

way that It knows Itself. And so, 'my soul is as earth without water unto Thee';[107] for, just as it cannot, of itself, enlighten itself, so, too, it cannot, of itself, satisfy itself. Thus, then, 'with Thee is the fountain of life,' just as 'in Thy Light we shall see light.'[108]

Chapter 17

(20) Who has gathered together the embittered[109] people into one society? For, even though they fluctuate in an innumerable diversity of concerns, the same end belongs to all of them; it is temporal and earthly happiness, which is the reason for all that they do. Who, O Lord, but Thou, who hast said that the waters should be gathered together in one congregation and that the dry land should appear,[110] thirsting for Thee; for, the sea is also Thine—indeed, Thou hast made it—and Thy hands formed the dry land?[111] For, not the bitterness of wills, but the congregation of waters, is called the sea. Thou dost even restrain the evil concupiscences of souls and dost fashion boundaries, up to which the waters are permitted to reach, so that their waves may break upon themselves;[112] thus dost Thou make the sea by the order of Thy command, which is over all things.

(21) Thou dost water, with a hidden and sweet spring, the souls who thirst after Thee and appear before Thee as separated by virtue of a different end from the society of the sea, so that even the earth may give forth its fruit.[113] And,

---

107 Ps. 142.6.
108 Ps. 35.10.
109 Cf. *Enarr. in ps.* 64.6.9 for a further explanation of the *amaricantes* as the people who have turned away from God. Book 19-21 of the *City of God* deal at great length with these citizens of the earthly city.
110 Cf. Gen. 1.9.
111 Cf. Ps. 94.5.
112 Cf. Job 38.10-11.
113 Cf. Gen. 1.10-11.

under Thy command, O Lord its God, it does give forth its fruit; our soul germinates works of mercy after its kind, loving its neighbor in actions of providing for fleshly needs, possessing seed in itself according to its kind; since, as a result of our infirmity, we feel compassion and are drawn to assist the needy, helping them just as we would desire to be helped, were we in like need. Nor merely in easy things, as in the case of the herb in seed, but also in supplying the protection of a strong and energetic help, like the tree which yields fruit, that is, gives assistance to rescue one who suffers injury from the hand of the mighty and provides him a sheltering protection in the strong support of just judgment.

Chapter 18

(22) Thus, O Lord, thus I pray Thee: let it spring up, Thou whose way it is to give joy and ability, let 'truth' spring up 'out of the earth,' and let 'justice look down from heaven,'[114] and 'Let there be lights made in the firmament.'[115] Let us break bread for the hungry and bring the poor man who has no shelter into our house; let us clothe the naked man and despise not the relatives of our flesh.[116]

And, when these fruits have been brought forth in the earth, see that it is good.[117] Let our temporal light break forth,[118] and from this harvest of good works here below, as we attain the Word of Life above, in the joys of contemplation, let us appear as 'lights in the world' holding fast to the firmament of Thy Scripture.

For, there dost Thou discourse with us, so that we may

114 Cf. Ps. 84.12.
115 Gen. 1.14.
116 Cf. Isa. 58.7-8.
117 Gen. 1.12.
118 Cf. Isa. 58.8; the last part of the sentence is a modification of Phil. 2.16.

distinguish between things of understanding and things of sense, as between day and night—or between some souls which are given over to intelligible objects and others given over to sensible things—so that, now, not only Thou, in the hidden place of Thy judgment, just as before the making of the firmament, dost distinguish between light and darkness, but also Thy spiritual ones, being placed and disposed in the same firmament, now that Thy grace has been manifested through the world, do 'shine above the earth and divide night and day and mark the periods of time.'[119] For, now 'the former things have passed away, behold, they are made new,'[120] and 'now our salvation is nearer than when we came to believe,'[121] and 'the night is far advanced, but the day is at hand,'[122] and 'Thou dost bless the crown of Thy year,'[123] sending 'laborers into Thy harvest,'[124] on the sowing of which 'others have labored,'[125] sending them even to another seeding whose harvest is at the last end.

Thus Thou grantest the wishes of him who desires and dost bless the years of the just man; 'Thou art the Selfsame'[126] and, in Thy years which do not fail, Thou dost make ready a storehouse for the years which pass away. In fact, by eternal design Thou dost bestow heavenly goods upon the earth at their proper times.

(23) For, 'to one through the Spirit is given the utterance of wisdom' (like the 'greater light'[127] for the sake of those who are delighted by the light of clearer truth—as the rule of the day); 'and to another the utterance of knowledge ac-

119 Gen. 1.14.
120 2 Cor. 5.17.
121 Rom. 13.11.
122 Rom. 13.12.
123 Ps. 64.12.
124 Matt. 9.38.
125 John 4.38.
126 Ps. 101.28.
127 Gen. 1.16.

cording to the same Spirit' (like a 'lesser light'); to another, faith; to another, the gift of healing; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, the distinguishing of spirits; to another, various kinds of tongues (and all these are like 'stars').[128] For 'all these things are the work of one and the same Spirit, who divides individually to each according as He will,'[129] and who makes the stars appear as a manifestation for profit.[130]

But, the utterance of knowledge, in which all the mysteries are contained which are changed with the times,[131] as is the moon, and the rest of the list of gifts which have been mentioned in succession, like the stars, differ so far from the brightness of wisdom, in which the aforementioned 'day' rejoices, that they are only 'to rule the night.'[132] For, they are necessary for those to whom that most prudent servant of Thine 'could not speak as to spiritual men but only as carnal,'[133] he, who speaks of wisdom among those who are mature.[134]

But the carnal man, like a child in Christ, a drinker of milk until he is strengthened enough for solid food and can hold his gaze firmly on the rays of the sun, let him not regard his night as barren of light; rather, let him be satisfied with the light of the moon and the stars.

These Thou dost discuss with us most wisely, our God, in

---

128 For these lines on the Gifts, cf. 1 Cor. 12.7-11.
129 Cf. 1 Cor. 12.11.
130 Cf. 1 Cor. 12.7.
131 Augustine explains (*Enarr. in ps.* 73.2) that the *sacramenta* of the Old Testament are not the same as those of the New.
132 *in principio noctis*: for the justification of the translation, cf. Gen. 1.16-18; *Enarr. in ps.* 135.8-9; *De Gen. lib. imperf.* 13.40. See Skutella, *Conf.*, p. 346, with his critical note on the possible variant, *principia,* and the parallel, *in principio diei* of the preceding paragraph (Sk. p. 345.9); also Gibb-Montgomery (p. 424.2, with note) who suggest the basis for the present translation.
133 1 Cor. 3.1.
134 1 Cor. 2.6.

Thy Book, Thy 'firmament,' so that we may clearly see all things by a marvelous contemplation, though still through signs, and seasons, and days and years.[135]

Chapter 19

(24) But, first, 'wash yourselves, be clean, take away the evil' from your souls and from the sight of my eyes,[136] that dry land may appear. 'Learn to do the good, judge for the fatherless and defend the widow,'[137] so that the earth will bring forth the green herb and the tree yielding fruit.[138] Then, come, let us discuss it,[139] the Lord says, so that 'lights may be made in the firmament of heaven, to give light upon the earth.'[140]

That rich man asked the Good Teacher[141] what he should do to gain eternal life. The Good Teacher, whom he thought a man and nothing more—but He is good because He is God—let our Good Teacher say to him that, if he wishes to enter into life, he should keep the commandments; that he should remove from himself the bitterness of malice and wickedness; that he should not kill, or commit adultery, or steal, or bear false witness, in order that dry land may appear and bring forth the honor of mother and father and the love of our neighbor. 'I have done all these things,' he said. Whence, then, so many thorns, if the earth is fruitful? Go, root out the bushy thickets of avarice, 'sell what thou hast' and grow rich in fruits by giving to the poor and thou shalt

135 Cf. Gen. 1.14.
136 Isa. 1.16.
137 Isa. 1.17.
138 Cf. Gen. 1.12.
139 Cf. Isa. 1.18.
140 Cf. Gen. 1.14-15.
141 That is, Christ. The whole paragraph quotes at length from Matt. 19.16-22; Mark 10.17-22; Luke 18.18-23.

have treasure in heaven, and follow the Lord, if thou dost wish to be perfect, as a companion of them amongst whom He speaks of wisdom, He who knows what to assign to the day and to the night—so that thou mayest also know it, and that, for thee, too, lights may be made in the firmament of heaven. And this will not be done, unless thy heart be there. This, again, will not be done, unless thy treasure be there, just as thou hast heard from the Good Teacher. But, the barren earth was grieved,[142] and the thorns choked out the Word.[143]

(25) But, you, 'a chosen race,'[144] the weak things of the world,[145] who have left all to follow the Lord,[146] go, follow after Him and confound the strong;[147] go, follow after Him: your feet are beautiful,[148] and shine in the firmament, that the heavens may show forth His glory,[149] distinguishing between the light of the perfect who are not yet like the angels and the darknesses of the little ones who are not without hope. Shine over every part of the earth, and let the day, lighted by the sun, give forth to the day the word of wisdom, and the night, lighted by the moon, announce to the night the word of knowledge. The moon and stars shine for the night, but the night does not obscure them, for they illuminate it according to its measure. For behold, as if God were saying: 'Let there be lights made in the firmament of heaven,'[150] 'suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a violent wind coming, and there appeared parted tongues as of fire, which settled upon each of them,'[151] and lights were made in the firmament of

142 Cf. Luke 18.23.
143 Cf. Matt. 13.7.
144 1 Pet. 2.9.
145 Cf. 1 Cor. 1.27.
146 Cf. Luke 18.28.
147 Cf. 1 Cor. 1.28.
148 Cf. Rom. 10.15.
149 Cf. Ps. 18.2.
150 Gen. 1.14.
151 Acts 2.2.

heaven, 'holding fast the word of life.'[152] Run in every direction, O holy fires, O beautiful fires! For, 'you are the light of the world,' nor are you 'under the measure.'[153] He, to whom you have held fast, has been exalted and He has exalted you. Run, and make it known to all nations.

Chapter 20

(26) Let the sea also conceive and bring forth your works, and 'let the waters bring forth creeping creatures having life.'[154] For, you, 'in separating the precious from the vile,'[155] have become as the mouth of God, through which He said, 'let the waters bring forth,' not the living creatures which the earth brings forth, but 'creeping creatures having life and the fowls that fly over the earth.'[156] For, Thy mysteries, O God, through the works of Thy saints, have crept among the waves of temptation in the world in order to steep the nations with Thy Name in Thy baptism.

And, among these, great wonders happened—like 'great whales'[157]—and the voices of Thy messengers 'flying over the earth,' in the firmament of Thy Book, which had been set over them for an authority under which they could fly, wherever they would go. For, 'there are no speeches nor languages, where their voices are not heard, since their sound hath gone forth into all the earth: and their words unto the ends of the world,'[158] since Thou, O Lord, didst multiply them by blessing them.

152 Cf. Phil. 2.16.
153 Matt. 5.14-15.
154 Gen. 1.20.
155 Jer. 15.19.
156 Gen. 1.20.
157 Gen. 1.21.
158 Ps. 18.4-5.

(27) Do I lie? Do I bring confusion by not distinguishing the clear knowledge of these things in the firmament of heaven from the bodily works in the rough sea and under the firmament of heaven?—There is firm and well-defined knowledge of some things which is not increased through the generations, as in the case of the lights of wisdom and science.[159] There are many and diverse corporeal workings of the same things, and they are multiplied by the growth of one from another, under Thy blessing, O God. And Thou hast consoled the fastidiousness of our mortal senses, by contriving it that one thing in our mind's knowledge may be symbolized and expressed in many ways through movements of the body.

The waters have brought forth these sacred things, but through Thy Word; the needs of people estranged from the eternity of Thy truth have brought them forth, but through Thy Gospel, because these waters have cast these things forth, for the languid bitterness of these waters was the reason why they went forth through Thy Word.

(28) All things from Thy working are beautiful, and behold, Thou who hast made all art, ineffably more beautiful. If Adam had not fallen, the bitter brine of the sea would not have flowed out from him as from his belly—the race of men which is profoundly curious and tempestuously proud and inconstantly fluctuating. And, in that case, there would have been no need for Thy spokesmen to use mystic deeds and words in working corporeally and sensibly in many waters. For, it is as mystical signs that the creeping creatures and fowls that fly now strike me, but men instructed and initiated by them, and made subject to corporeal rites, would not make further progress, unless the soul were to live spiritually on another level and were to look forward to complete perfection after the word of admission.[160]

---

159 On the distinction of *sapientia* and *scientia,* cf. *De Trin.* 12.15.25.

160 Cf. Heb. 6.1; *'ideoque remittentes initii Christi verbum, in consummationem respiciamus'* is the version used by Augustine and quoted in *Epist. ad Rom. inchoata expos.* 19.

Chapter 21

(29) And as a result, through Thy word, not the depths of the sea, but the earth separated from the bitterness of the waters, produced, not creeping creatures having life and fowl that fly, but 'a living soul.'[161] Nor, indeed, has this soul any further need for baptism, as the pagans do, though it did need it when it was covered with the waters. For, there is no other way of entering into the kingdom of heaven, from the moment that Thou hast established it as the means of entrance. Nor does it seek great and marvelous things by which faith may come to be. For it does not refuse to believe unless it sees 'signs and wonders,[162] since the faithful earth is already separated from the waters of the sea which are bitter in infidelity—and 'tongues are as a sign, not to believers, but to unbelievers.'[163]

Nor does the earth, which Thou hast established over the waters, need that kind of 'fowl that fly,' which the waters have brought forth through Thy Word. Send Thy Word to it by means of Thy messengers. For, we but tell of their works, while Thou art He who workest in them, and thus they achieve their work, 'the living soul.'

The earth brings forth this soul, because the earth is the cause for these things being done in it, just as the sea was the cause for the production of the 'creeping creatures having life and the fowl that fly under the firmament of heaven.'[164] Of the fowl, the earth has need no longer; however, it feeds upon the 'Fish,'[165] lifted from the deep to that table which

161 Gen. 1.24. In what follows, the 'living soul' is taken as that group within the Church who live a life of religious perfection.
162 John 4.48.
163 1 Cor. 14.22.
164 Gen. 1.20.
165 The 'Fish' (Lat. *piscis;* Gr. *ichthus*) is the traditional symbol of Christ; cf. *De civ. Dei* 18.25. For the history of the symbolism, cf. J. Quasten, *Patrology* (Utrecht–Brussels 1950) I. 24, 169-175, and the references therein to the definitive German studies by F. J. Dölger.

Thou hast prepared in the sight[166] of believers. The reason why He was lifted from the deep was to nourish the dry land. So, too, the birds are the offspring of the sea, yet they are multiplied upon the earth. For, the infidelity of men stands forth as the reason for the preaching of the first evangelists, but the faithful also are exhorted and blessed many times by them, day after day. Yet, the 'living soul' takes its origin from the earth, because it is only profitable to those who already believe to restrain themselves from the love of this world, that their soul may live for Thee—for it was dead while living for delights,[167]—delights that bring death, O Lord! For, it is Thou who art the life-giving delight of a pure heart.

(30) And so, may Thy ministers work now on the 'earth,' not as they did in the waters of infidelity by proclaiming and preaching by means of miracles, and mysteries, and mystical words, wherein ignorance, the mother of wonder, becomes attentive from the fear of secret symbols (for, such is the entrance to the faith for the sons of Adam who have forgotten Thee, while they hide themselves from Thy face and become an abyss), but let them work, as if on dry land, separated from the whirlpools of the abyss. May they be a 'pattern to the believers,'[168] by living openly with them and by instigating them to do likewise.

For, thus, not only to hear but also to act, do men hear: 'Seek ye God, and your soul shall live,'[169] so that the 'earth may bring forth a living soul.' 'Be not conformed to this world,'[170] keep yourselves away from it. The soul lives by avoiding what it dies by desiring. Restrain yourselves from the monstrous fierceness of pride, from the soft pleasure of luxury, and from the deceptive name of science—so that the wild beasts may become gentle, the cattle thoroughly dom-

166 Cf. Ps. 22.5.
167 Cf. 1 Tim. 5.6.
168 1 Thess 1.7: 'pattern' translates *forma* (Gr. *typos*).
169 Ps. 68.33.
170 Rom. 12.2.

esticated, and the serpents harmless. For, the passions of the soul[171] are these things, allegorically. But, the arrogance of pride, the pleasure of lust, and the poison of curiosity are the movements of a dead soul; not that it is dead in such a way as to lack all movement, but, since it dies by 'abandoning the fountain of life,'[172] and thus is taken up by the transitory world and is conformed to it.

(31) But, Thy Word, O God, is the Fountain of eternal life and it does not pass away.[173] Thus, that abandonment is restrained by Thy Word, when it is said to us: 'Be not conformed to this world,' so that the earth may bring forth, through the fountain of life, a living soul—in Thy Word, a continent soul through the agency of Thy evangelists, because of its imitation of the imitators of Thy Christ. This is the meaning of 'according to its kind,'[174] for a man tends to imitate his friend. 'Be ye like me,' he [St. Paul] says, 'because I also have become like you.'[175]

Thus, there will be in the living soul wild beasts that are good in the meekness of action. For, Thou hast commanded it, in these words: 'do thy works in meekness, and thou shalt be beloved'[176] by every man. And the good cattle, too, will be good: if they eat, they will have no advantage; and, if they do not eat, they will suffer no loss.[177] And there will be good serpents, not dangerous so as to cause harm, but wise so as to take care, only investigating temporal nature enough so that eternity may be seen as an object of understanding 'through the things that are made.'[178] These animals are obedient

171 *motus animae*: becomes the standard name in mediaeval theology for the passions of the soul; cf. St. Thomas, *S.T.* I.II, 23, 2 c; St. Bonaventure, *In III Sent.* d. 15, art. 2, q. 2, resp.
172 Cf. Jer. 2.13.
173 Cf John 4.14.
174 Gen. 1.21.
175 Gal. 4.12.
176 Eccli. 3.19.
177 Cf. 1 Cor. 8.8.
178 Rom. 1.20.

to reason when they live in restraint from a deadly path and they are good.

Chapter 22

(32) For, behold, O Lord our God, our Creator, when our affections, in which we were dying by living badly, have been restrained from the love of the world, and the living soul has begun to exist by living well, and Thy Word has been fulfilled, in which Thou didst say through Thy Apostle: 'Be not conformed to this world,' that also will follow which Thou didst add immediately, saying: 'but be transformed in the newness of your mind'[179]—not now 'according to his kind,' as if we were to imitate our neighbor living before us, or to live after the example of a better man. For, Thou didst not say 'Be man made according to his kind,' but rather: 'Let us make man to our image and likeness,'[180] that we may discern what is Thy will.[181]

For this reason, that dispenser of Thy word, who generates children through the Gospel, said, lest he might always have little ones whom he would nourish on milk and care for like a nurse: 'be transformed in the newness of your mind that you may discern' for yourselves 'what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.'[182]

And so, Thou dost not say: 'Be man made,' but: 'Let us make;' nor dost Thou say: 'according to his kind,' but: 'to our image and likeness.' Indeed, he who is renewed in mind and sees clearly Thy intellectual truth does not need a man to show him how to imitate his own kind. Rather, with Thee as a guide, he himself discerns what is Thy will, what is the

179 Rom. 12.2.
180 Gen. 1.26.
181 Cf. Rom. 12.2.
182 The version of Rom. 12.2 used by Augustine included a redundant *vos*, not in the Vulgate; cf. *Epist.* 120.20; *De civ. Dei* 10.6.

good, the acceptable, and the perfect. And Thou dost teach him, now that he is able, to see the Trinity of unity and the unity of the Trinity.

Thus, from the plural statement: 'Let us make man,' one moves on, nevertheless, to the singular: 'and God made man:'[183] and then, from the plural statement: 'to our image,' one moves on to the singular: 'to the image of God.' Thus, man is 'renewed unto the knowledge of God, according to the image of his creator,'[184] and becoming 'the spiritual man judges all things' (those which are to be judged, of course) 'and he himself is judged by no man.'[185]

Chapter 23

(33) Now, that he 'judges all things,'—that means that he has dominion over the fish of the sea and the fowl that fly in the heavens, and all domestic and wild animals, and every part of the earth, and all creeping creatures that move upon the earth.[186] This he exercises by virtue of the understanding of his mind, through which he 'perceives the things that are of the Spirit of God.'[187] Otherwise, 'man when he was in honor did not understand; he has been compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them.'[188]

Therefore, in Thy Church, our God, according to Thy grace which Thou hast given it, for Thy 'workmanship we are, created in good works,'[189] not only those who are in spiritual authority, but also those who are the spiritual sub-

183 Gen. 1.27.
184 Col. 3.10.
185 1 Cor. 2.15.
186 Gen. 1.26.
187 1 Cor. 2.14.
188 Ps. 48.21.
189 Cf. Eph. 2.10.

jects of those in authority—Thou hast made man 'male and female'[190] in this way, in Thy spiritual grace, where there is no male or female according to the sex of the body, for: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor freeman.'[191] And so, spiritual persons, whether they hold positions of authority or of obedience, judge in a spiritual way, not of the spiritual kinds of knowledge which shine in the firmament (for one should not judge such a sublime authority), nor of Thy Book itself, even though some part of it may not shine clearly, because we submit our understanding to it and hold as certain that even what has been concealed from our gazes is rightly and truthfully spoken. Thus, man, though now spiritual and 'renewed unto the knowledge of God, according to the image of his Creator,' should be a 'doer of the law,'[192] not a judge. Nor does he judge concerning that differentiation, namely, of spiritual and carnal men, who are known to Thine eyes, our God, and have not yet appeared to us in any works, that we might know them from their fruits.[193] But Thou, O Lord, already knowest them and hast separated and called them in secret, before the firmament was made. Nor, though he is spiritual, does man judge of the troubled peoples of this world. For, what has he 'to do with judging those outside,'[194] being ignorant as to who will come in from there to the sweetness of Thy grace and who will remain in the everlasting bitterness of impiety?

(34) Therefore, man, whom Thou hast made in Thy image, has not received dominion over the lights of the heavens, or over that hidden heaven, or over day and night, which Thou hast called forth before setting up the heavens, or over the gathering of the waters which is the sea; but he has received dominion over the fish of the sea, and the fowl

---

190 Gen. 1.27.
191 Gal. 3.28.
192 Jer. 4.11.
193 Cf. Matt. 7.20.
194 1 Cor. 5.12.

that fly in the heavens, and all beasts, and every part of the earth, and all creeping things which creep over the earth.[195]

Indeed, he judges and approves the right, but he disapproves of what he finds wrong, either in the sacramental celebration whereby those are initiated whom Thy mercy seeks out in many waters; or in that celebration[196] in which that 'Fish' is produced, whom the pious 'earth'[197] feeds upon, when He has been elevated from the depths; or in the signs and expressions of words, subject to the authority of Thy Book (like the fowls, as it were, flying under Thy 'firmament'), that is, by interpretation, by exposition, by discoursing, by disputing, by blessing and by invoking[198] Thee, the words rushing forth and sounding from the mouth, that the people may answer: Amen. The reason for all these words being expressed corporeally is the abyss of this world and the blindness of the flesh, as a result of which the objects of thought cannot be seen; hence, the need to make sounds which assail the ears. Thus, though the fowl that fly are multiplied over the earth, they take their origin from the waters.

The spiritual man judges, then, by approving what he finds right, and by disapproving what he finds wrong, in the works and behavior of the faithful, in their almsgiving, which is like the earth yielding its fruit; and he judges the living soul when its affections have been made meek in chastity, in fastings,[199] and in holy cogitations upon those things which are perceived through the bodily senses. He is now said to judge concerning those things over which he holds the power of correction.

---

195 Gen. 1.28.

196 The sacrifice of the Mass, and Holy Eucharist, are here indicated (see above, n. 165), as is baptism in the first part of the sentence.

197 Members of the Church; see above, 21.29, for the description of the 'faithful' as 'earth.'

198 Augustine is suggesting that all these functions of preaching take their origin in Christ and the 'waters' of Scripture.

199 2 Cor. 6.5-6.

Chapter 24

(35) But, what are the nature and magnitude of this further mystery? Behold, Thou dost bless men, O Lord, so that they may 'increase and multiply and fill the earth.'[200] Dost Thou not suggest something to us from this, so that we may understand why Thou didst not in the same way bless the light which Thou hast called day, or the firmament of heaven, or the lights, or the stars, or the earth, or the sea? I might say, our God, who hast created us to Thy image, I might say that Thou didst desire to endow man only with this gift of blessing, hadst Thou not blessed the fish and whales in the same way, so that they might increase and multiply and fill the waters of the sea, and the fowls that they might multiply upon the earth. Again, I might say that this blessing pertains to those kinds of things which propagate by generating from themselves, if I could find it in the case of trees and plants and beasts of the earth. However, for herbs and trees, and for beasts and creeping things it was not said: 'increase and multiply'; yet all these, also, just as fish and birds and men, increase by generation and so maintain their kind.

(36) What, then, shall I say, O Truth my Light? That this is an empty, or a meaningless statement? Not at all, O Father of piety; perish the thought that a servant of Thy Word may say this. And, if I do not understand what Thou meanest by this expression, let better men make better use of it—that is, those who are more intelligent than I am—wise according as Thou hast to each given understanding.[201]

But, let my confession also be pleasing before Thy eyes, in which I confess to Thee that I believe, O Lord, that it was not in vain that Thou didst speak thus. Nor shall I keep silent

200 Gen. 1.28.
201 Cf. 1 Cor. 3.5.

regarding the thought which comes to mind at the moment of reading this text. For, it is true, and I do not see what might hinder me from so interpreting the figurative statements of Thy Books. I know that what is understood in but one way by the mind may be expressed in many ways through the body, and what is expressed in but one way through the body may be understood in many ways by the mind. Notice the simple love of God and neighbor—by how great a multiplicity of symbols and by what innumerable tongues, and in each language by countless ways of speaking, it is proclaimed corporeally. It is in this sense that the offspring of the waters increase and multiply. Pay attention again, whoever is reading this; here is what Scripture presents and the voice expresses in but one way: 'in the beginning, God made heaven and earth.' Can it not be understood in many ways, not by the deception of errors, but by various kinds of true meanings? Thus, too, do the offspring of men increase and multiply.

(37) And so, if we think of the natures themselves of things, not allegorically but properly, then the phrase: 'increase and multiply,' applies to all things that are generated from seeds. But, if we treat these words as propounded figuratively (which I prefer to think the Scripture intended, for it certainly did not attribute that blessing to the offspring of sea animals and men alone, without reason), we find 'multitudes,' then, also in spiritual creatures and corporeal ones, as in the case of heaven and earth—and in just and unjust souls, as in light and darkness—and in the holy authors, who have been the ministers of the law, as in the firmament which was established between water and water—and in the society of the people of bitterness, as in the sea—and in the zeal of pious souls, as in the dry land—and in the works of mercy according to the present life, as in the seminal herbs

and fruitful trees—and in the spiritual gifts displayed 'for profit,' as in the lights of heaven—and in the affections formed for temperance, as in the living soul.[202]

In all these cases, we encounter multitudes and fecundity and increase; but, that mode of increase and multiplication which consists in the fact that one thing is expressed in many ways and one expression is understood in many ways, this we find only in the case of signs promulgated corporeally and of things thought out intelligently.

We have understood the corporeally expressed signs as meant by the generations coming from the waters, because of the necessary causes associated with our fleshly lowliness, but the intelligibly thought-out things we have understood as meant by the human generations, in view of the fecundity of our reason.

For that reason, we believe that 'increase and multiply' was said by Thee, O Lord, to both kinds of things.[203] I take it that, in this blessing, the ability and the power has been granted us by Thee, both to express in many ways what we hold as understood in but one way, and to understand in many ways what we read as obscurely expressed in but one way. Thus, the waters of the sea are filled, and they are not stirred, except by diverse meanings; thus, also, the earth is filled with human conceptions, whose dryness appears in a thirst for knowledge, and yet reason has dominion over this thirst.

Chapter 25

(38) I also wish to say, O Lord my God, what the next verse in Thy Scripture suggests to me. And I shall say it, and

---

202 It should be noted that this paragraph gathers together many of the allegorical usages which are keys to the understanding of the interpretations of Genesis, in the earlier chapters of this book. On the 'gifts displayed for profit' cf. above, 18.23, and 1 Cor. 12.7.

203 I.e., both to the sea-creatures and to man.

not be afraid. For, I shall speak true things, with Thee to inspire in me what Thou didst wish me to say of these words. Nor do I believe that I can tell the truth when inspired by any other than Thee, since Thou art 'the truth,'[204] but 'every man is a liar.'[205] And so, he who 'tells a lie speaks from his own nature.'[206] Therefore, that I may speak the truth, I shall speak from what is Thine.

Behold, Thou hast given us as food 'every herb bearing seed upon the whole earth, and all trees that have in themselves seed of their own kind';[207] and, not merely to us, but also to all the birds in the heavens and beasts on the earth, and to the serpents—but Thou hast not given these to the fish and the great whales.

We were saying that by these fruits of the earth are signified and figuratively expressed the works of mercy, which are furnished for the needs of this life from the fruitful earth. Such an 'earth' was the holy Onesiphorus, to whose house Thou didst 'grant mercy,'[208] because he often comforted Thy Paul and was not ashamed of his chains. This, also, 'the brethren' did, and they brought forth fruit of like kind, for 'they supplied his needs from Macedonia.'[209] But, how he is saddened over some 'trees' which did not give him the fruit that they owed, as when he says: 'At my first defense, no one came to my support, but all forsook me; may it not be laid to their charge.'[210] For, these things are owed to them who are ministers of the rational[211] doctrine, through their understanding of the divine mysteries. And this debt is due to them

204 Cf. John 14.6.
205 Rom. 3.4.
206 John 8.44.
207 Gen. 1.29.
208 2 Tim. 1.16; where St. Paul commends Onesiphorus for his good services.
209 Cf. 2 Cor. 11.9.
210 2 Tim. 4.16.
211 *rationalis*: used in ecclesiastical Latin to describe true religious teaching.

as human beings; yet it is also due to them as to the living soul, since they offer themselves as an example of complete continence. Again, it is owed to them, as to the flying fowl, because of their blessings, which are multiplied on the earth, for 'their sound hath gone forth into all the earth.'[212]

Chapter 26

(39) But, those who are nourished by these fruits are those who take joy in them; however, those people 'whose god is the belly'[213] take no pleasure in them. Even in the case of those who supply these things, it is not what they give that is the fruit, but, rather, the disposition of mind with which they give it.

Thus, I can see clearly the source of the joy of him who was serving God and not his own belly; I see it, and I certainly rejoice with him. He had received from the Philippians the things that they had sent by Epaphroditus, yet I see the real source of his rejoicing. The source of his joy was the source of his nourishment, for, speaking truly, he said: 'I have rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last your concern for me has flowered again; indeed, you were always concerned,'[214] but you had grown weary. These people, then, had grown languid from a long boredom and had become arid, as it were, in respect of the fruit of good work; so, he rejoices for them, because they began to flower again—not for himself, that they helped him in his need. So, he says, in what follows: 'Not that I speak because I was in want; for I have learned to be self-sufficing in whatever circum-

212 Ps. 18.5.
213 Phil. 3.19.
214 Phil. 4.10; Augustine had a modified version of the text.

stances I am. I know how to live humbly, and I know how to live in abundance; I have been schooled to every place and every condition, to be filled and to be hungry, to have abundance and to suffer want: I can do all things in Him Who strengthens me.'[215]

(40) What, then, is the source of thy joy, O Paul the Great? Whence dost thou rejoice, whence dost thou derive nourishment, O man 'renewed unto perfect knowledge of God, according to the image of thy Creator,'[216] O 'living soul' of such continence, and tongue like as flying fowl 'speaking mysteries'?[217] To people with such souls, these foods are owed, indeed. What is it that nourishes thee? Joy. Let me hear what follows: 'Still,' he says, 'you have done well by sharing in my affliction.'[218] This is the source of his joy, of his nourishment, that those people have done rightly, not that his difficulty has been relieved. For, he says to Thee: 'when I was in distress, Thou hast enlarged me,'[219] because, in Thee who dost strengthen him, he knows how to live in abundance and to suffer want. 'But Philippians,' he says, 'you yourselves also know that in the first days of the Gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church went into partnership with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you only; for, even in Thessalonica, you sent once and twice something for my need.'[220] He now rejoices that they have returned to these good works, and he is glad that they have flowered again, as when a field regains its strength in fertility.

(41) Now, was it in reference to his own needs that he said: 'you sent something for my needs'; is it for this reason

215 Phil. 4.11-12.
216 Col. 3.10.
217 1 Cor. 14.2.
218 Phil. 4.14.
219 Ps. 4.2.
220 Phil. 4.15-17.

that he is joyful? Not on that account. How do we know this? Because he himself adds this statement: 'not that I am eager for the gift, but I am eager for the fruit.'[221]

I have learned from Thee, O my God, to distinguish the gift from the fruit. The gift is the thing itself which a person hands over in bestowing these necessities; for instance, money, food, drink, clothing, shelter, assistance. But, the fruit is the good and right will of the giver. The Good Teacher does not say[222] merely: 'he who receives a prophet,' but He adds: 'because he is a prophet'; nor does He say only: 'he who receives a just man,' but He adds: 'because he is a just man'; thus, one man receives the reward of a prophet, and the other the reward of a just man. Nor does He simply say: 'whoever gives to one of my little ones a cup of cold water,' but He adds: 'provided it is because he is a disciple,' and so concludes: 'amen, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.' The 'gift' is to receive the prophet, to receive the just man, to offer a cup of cold water to a disciple; but the 'fruit' is to do this because he is a prophet, because he is a just man, because he is a disciple. With such 'fruit' was Elias fed by the widow, who knew that she was feeding a man of God, and she fed him for that reason; but, by the raven,[223] he was actually fed with the 'gift.' Not Elias, the interior man, but the exterior man was thus fed; for he might even have perished in want of such food.

Chapter 27

(42) Hence, I shall tell what is true before Thee, O Lord. When men who are uninstructed, or unbelievers,[224] for whom

221 Phil. 4.17.
222 Matt. 10.41-42; the text runs through several lines.
223 3 Kings 17.6.
224 1 Cor. 14.23.

these rites for beginners and mighty workings of miracles (which we believe to be meant by the terms 'fishes and whales') are necessary, in order that they be introduced and won over—when these people give corporeal refreshment or assistance for any need of the present life to Thy children, without knowing why this should be done or what is its purpose, they do not really nourish them, nor are the latter nourished by them, because they neither perform these works with a holy and right will, nor do the recipients of these gifts feel any joy, when they see that there is as yet no fruit. Indeed, the mind is nourished from the same source whence it derives its joy. Therefore, the fish and whales do not feed upon the food which the earth only produces, when separated and removed from the bitterness of the sea's waves.

Chapter 28

(43) And Thou sawest, O God, all the things that Thou hadst made, and, behold, 'they were very good.'[225] We, too, see them, and, behold, they are all very good. For each kind of Thy works, when Thou hadst said that they were to be made, and they were made, Thou didst see that each in turn is good. I have counted seven times where it is written that Thou didst see that what Thou hast made is good; and this is the eighth, that Thou didst see all things that Thou hast made, and behold, they are not merely good, but even very good when taken all together. For, the individual things are merely good, but all together they are both good and very much so. All beautiful bodies express the same truth, for a body is far more beautiful, in the fact that it is constituted out of parts which are all beautiful, than are these parts taken individually; for, the whole is perfected by the most orderly

225 Gen. 1.31

gathering of these parts—even though they are also beautiful, when considered individually.[226]

Chapter 29

(44) And I looked eagerly to find out whether it was seven or eight times that Thou didst see that Thy works are good, when they pleased Thee. But, in Thy vision, I did not find the times through which I might understand how many times Thou didst see what things Thou hast made. And so, I said: 'O Lord, is not this Scripture of Thine true, for Thou art truthful and Thou, as the Truth,[227] didst give it forth? Why, then, dost Thou say to me that there are no times in Thy sight, yet this Scripture of Thine says to me that Thou hast seen, on each individual day, that the things which Thou hast made are good, and, when I count them, I find out how many times?'

In reply to these words, Thou dost say to me, for Thou art my God[228] and Thou speakest in a loud voice in the interior ear of Thy servant, breaking through my deafness and crying out: 'O man, to be sure I say what My Scripture says. However, it speaks in a temporal way, but time does not apply to My Word, for it exists with Me, equally in eternity. Thus, the things which you men see through My Spirit, these do I see, just as the things which you men say through My Spirit, these do I say. But, while you see them in time, I do not see in time, just as, when you say them in time, I do not say them in time.'

---

226 Cf. *De Gen. c. Manich.* 1.21.
227 Cf. John 3.33.
228 Cf. Ps. 49.7.

Chapter 30

(45) I heard, O Lord, my God, and I drew out a drop of sweetness from Thy Truth. I understood, too, that there are some men whom Thy works do not please, and they say that Thou hast made many of them, under the compulsion of necessity: such as the framework of the heavens and the arrangements of the stars.[229] And, moreover, Thou hadst not made them from Thy own, but they were already created elsewhere and from another source, that Thou mightest draw together, join together, and build them into a structure, when Thou didst erect the walls of the world from amidst Thy conquered enemies, so that, by this construction, the vanquished would be rendered incapable of again making war against Thee. And other things Thou hadst neither made nor even fastened them together; for example, all beings having flesh, and all the very small living things, and whatever is rooted to the earth. Rather, a hostile mind, and a different nature, which was not created by Thee but was set over in opposition to Thee in the lower parts of the world, generated and formed these things.

Demented people say these things, since they do not see Thy works through Thy Spirit, nor do they recognize Thee in them.

Chapter 31

(46) But, those who see them through Thy Spirit, it is Thou who seest in them. Therefore, when they see that things are good, Thou seest that they are good. And, whenever they are pleased with things on Thy account, Thou art giving

229 On the Manichaean teaching that the powers of darkness existed in the very fabric of the universe (*in ipsa structura mundi*), cf. *Contra Faust.* 6.8.

pleasure in them. Whatever things are pleasing to us, through Thy Spirit, are pleasing to Thee, in us. 'For who among men knows the things of a man save the spirit of a man which is in him? Even so, the things of God no one knows but the Spirit of God. Now we,' he says, 'have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit that is from God, that we may know the things that have been given us by God.'[230]

And I am admonished to say: of course, 'no one knows the things of God but the Spirit of God.' How, then, do we also know 'the things that have been given us by God?' The answer is given me: that even the things which we know through His Spirit 'no one knows but the Spirit of God.' Just as it has been rightly said to them that spoke in the Spirit of God: 'it is not you who are speaking,' so is it rightly said to them who know in the Spirit of God: 'it is not you who know.'[231] Thus, it is no less rightly said to those that see in the Spirit of God: 'it is not you who see.' Thus, whatever they see in the Spirit of God, as good, it is not themselves, but God, who sees that is it good.

Therefore, it is one thing for a person to consider that a good thing is bad—such people have been mentioned above. It is a different thing for a man to see that a good thing is good, in the sense that Thy creation is pleasing to many people, because it is good; but, to these people Thou art not pleasing in it—hence, they wish to enjoy it, rather than Thee. But, it is still another thing that, when a man sees something as good, God should see in him that it is good, and this clearly, that He may be loved in that which He made, who could only be loved through the Spirit whom He has given us, 'because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us.'[232] Through Him

230 1 Cor. 2.11-12.
231 Matt. 10.20.
232 Rom. 5.5.

do we see that whatever exists in any way is good. For, it is from Him who does not merely exist 'in some way,' but *is* absolutely.[233]

Chapter 32

(47) Thanks be to Thee, O Lord![234] We see heaven and earth, either the higher and lower corporeal parts, or spiritual and corporeal creation. And, for the adornment of these parts, by which either the whole bulk of the world, or the entire created universe, is constituted, we see light made and separated from darkness. We see the firmament of heaven, the original body of the world, either between the spiritual waters,[235] which are higher, and the corporeal waters, which are lower, or this stretch of atmosphere (for it is also called heaven, through which the birds of the heavens fly about aimlessly between the waters which are carried above them in vapor and which even fall in dew on calm nights), and those waters which are heavy and flow upon the earth.

We behold the beautiful form of the waters gathered upon the plains of the sea, and the dry land, either bare or so formed that is is visible and ordered, the mother of plants and trees. We see the luminous bodies shining on high: the sun is adequate for the day, the moon and stars console the night—and periods of time are marked and indicated by all these. We see the moist part of nature, teeming in every

233 *sed est, est*: the Latin is not certain, the older editions and several Mss. have *sed est quod est, est* (or a similar variant); the reading followed here has good Ms. authority and is adopted both in Skutella and Gibb-Montgomery. However, the meaning is clear: God exists absolutely, without dependence on any other being It obviously stems from Exod. 3.14.

234 Cf. Apoc. 11.17.

235 This is practically the only passage which Augustine criticizes in his *Retract.* (2.6.2): 'in the thirteenth book [of the *Confessions*] my statement, *the firmament made between the spiritual waters which are higher and the corporeal waters which are lower,* was not said with sufficient consideration; the point is, in fact, quite abstruse.'

portion with fish and animals and birds, because the density of the atmosphere which supports the flight of birds thickens by means of the evaporation of the waters. We see that the face of the earth is adorned by earthly animals, and that man, in Thy image and likeness, is placed above all irrational living things by this image and likeness of Thine, namely, the power of reason and of understanding. And, just as there is one thing in his soul which rules by virtue of the act of deliberation, and there is another which is made subject so that it may obey, so, also, there was also made for man, corporeally, woman—who had, indeed, a nature equal in mental capacity of rational intelligence, but made subject, by virtue of the sex of her body, to the male sex in the same way that the appetite for action is made subject, in order to conceive by the rational mind[236] the skill of acting rightly.[237] We see these things, and they are individually good; but, all together, they are very good.

Chapter 33

(48) Thy works praise Thee,[238] so that we may love Thee; and we love Thee, so that Thy works may praise Thee. They have their beginning and end from time—their rising and setting, their advance and decline, their beauty of form and its privation. They have, then, their sequences of morning and evening, in part hidden, in part manifest. They have been made from nothing by Thee, not out of Thee, or out of any matter which is not Thine, or which was in existence before, but out of concreated matter; that is, one made by Thee

236 Cf. *De Gen. c. Manich.* 2.11.15.

237 Two things are to be noted: (a) the comparison between biological and intellectual conception: (b) *sollertia* is used to name a 'part' of prudence, as in later moral theology; cf. St. Thomas, *S.T.* II-II, 49, 4 c.

238 Cf. Ps. 144.10.

at the same time, since Thou didst form its formlessness, without any interval of time.[239]

For, since the material of heaven and earth is different from the form [*species*] of heaven and earth, Thou hast, indeed, made the material out of absolutely nothing, but the form of the world out of formless matter; however, both are simultaneous, in the sense that form followed matter with no intervening delay.

Chapter 34

(49) We have also looked[240] at these things with an eye to their figurative meaning, which Thou didst intend, either in the order of their coming into being, or in the order in which they were written. We have seen that they are individually good and collectively very good; in Thy Word, in Thy only Son, [we have seen] 'heaven and earth' as the Head and Body of the Church, preordained before all time, without 'morning or evening.'[241]

And, then, Thou didst begin to carry out these predestined things in the order of time, so as to show Thy hidden things and to put our disordered parts in order (for, our sins were upon us[242] and we had wandered away from Thee into the dark deep, and Thy Good Spirit moved above to help us at the opportune time); Thou didst make the impious just,[243] didst separate them from the wicked, and didst establish the firmament of the authority of Thy Book between those men in upper places who were submissive to Thy teaching and

239 This point is always stressed by Augustine; matter did not exist before form; cf. above, 12.29.40. He differs from the Platonic theory of matter on this point.

240 Augustine begins a summary of his allegorical interpretations of Genesis, from sect. 8 to sect. 35, above.

241 Gen. 1.31.

242 Ezech. 33.10.

243 Cf. Prov. 17.15; Rom. 4.5.

those in lower places who were subject to those men. Thou didst gather together the society of unbelievers into one union, so that the zeal of the believers might be evident, that they might produce works of mercy for Thee, distributing earthly means to the poor, in order to acquire heavenly goods.

Then, Thou didst set lights ablaze in the firmament, Thy saints who possess the Word of Life and shine, in their exalted and sublime authority, with their spiritual gifts. Next, Thou didst produce out of corporeal matter the sacred rites, visible miracles, and verbal expressions in accord with the firmament of Thy Book, by which even the faithful were blessed, in order that unbelieving peoples would be instructed. Then, Thou didst form the living soul of the faithful, through affections well ordered by the strength of continence. Next, Thou didst renew, to Thy image and likeness, the mind which was subject to Thee alone, which required no human authority to imitate. Thou didst make rational action subject to commanding intelligence, as woman is to man. To all offices of Thy ministry, necessary in this life for the preservation of the faithful, Thou didst will that these same faithful, to meet temporal needs, should proffer services that would be fruitful for the life to come.

All these things we see, and they are very good; for, Thou seest them in us, Thou who hast given us the Spirit in whom we might see them and love Thee in them.

Chapter 35

(50) O Lord God, grant us peace[244]—for Thou hast provided all things for us—the peace of rest, the peace of the Sabbath, the peace without an 'evening.' For, indeed, this very beautiful order of things which are very good will pass

244 Cf. Num. 6.21; 2 Thess. 3.16.

away, when they have accomplished their allotted measures; for both a 'morning' and an 'evening' were made in them.

Chapter 36

(51) Now, the seventh day is without an 'evening' and has no setting, because Thou hast blessed it unto eternal duration, so that the fact of Thy resting on the seventh day, after Thy very good works (even though Thou didst perform them while at rest), might, through the voice of Thy Book, be for us a foretelling of this: that we also, after our works, which are only very good because Thou didst grant them to us, shall rest in Thee during the Sabbath of eternal life.

Chapter 37

(52) For, then shalt Thou rest in us, in the same way that Thou workest in us now. Thus will that rest be Thine through us, in the same way that these works are Thine through us.[245] But Thou, O Lord, workest always; yet, dost rest always. Thou seest not in time, movest not in time, reposest not in time; yet, Thou dost make temporal visions, and the times themselves, and the period of rest that proceeds from time.

Chapter 38

(53) So, we see these things which Thou hast made, because they exist, but they exist because Thou seest them.[246]

245 Cf. *De Gen. ad lit.* 4.9.16.

246 Cf. *De civ. Dei* 11.10. Malebranche was able to quote page after page (*Recherche de la vérité*, Introd.) from Augustine, to the effect that the created world exists only in God's knowledge. Yet, there is no question that Augustine believed in the real and separate existence of the world, and is not a true forerunner of occasionalism.

We see, externally, that they exist, but internally, that they are good; Thou hast seen them made, in the same place where Thou didst see them as yet to be made.

And we have been moved at a later time to do good, after our heart conceived it by Thy Spirit, but at an earlier time, abandoning Thee, we were moved to do evil; but Thou, O one good God, hast never ceased to do what is good. Some of our works are good, through Thy bounty, of course, but they are not eternal; after them, we hope to be at rest in Thy great sanctification. But, Thou, the Good lacking no good, art ever at rest, for Thou art Thine own repose.

What man will give any man the actual understanding of this? What angel will give it to an angel? What angel will give it to man? From Thee must it be asked; in Thee must it be sought; at Thy door must one knock. Thus, thus, will it be received; thus, will it be found; thus, will Thy door be opened.[247]

247 Matt. 7.7-8; Augustine here picks up the theme of 12.1.1, above.

INDEX

INDEX